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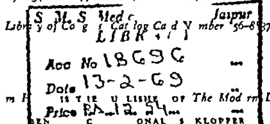
The Sea Gull
Uncle Vanya
The Three Sisters
The Cherry Orchard

Translated and with an introduction by

STARK YOUNG



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INTRODUCTION

by STARK YOUNG

It was my intention to begin this preface with some discussion, however brief, of Chekhov s qualities as a dramatist But one way or another through the numerous translations and very often through some of the theatrical performances, there has gathered around his name the greatest variety of impressions or conceptions, of him He may be put down as morbid or as having something too much of the Russian soul it may be said that his plays lack plot, that his speeches are often too involved, that he is depressing, that he provides little spice or action for the players, and so on and so on according to the critic in each case

*In fact, when I made a translation for Miss Lynn Fon*tanne and Mr Alfred Lunt some seasons ago, there were a good many people who always spoke of it as an adaptation meaning to praise my effort and at the same time to indicate their relief from too much of this Russian dramatist

On the other hand a note came to me, unrequested from Dr Nicholas Rumanceff for thirty years a member of the Moscow Art Theatre sometime chairman of its

Board of Directors and a well known scholar After reading the reviews I might have concluded that *The Sea Gull* had been rearranged for a better understanding and response on the part of American audiences Knowing the other translations and knowing the play I could easily have believed that this new version to be thus successful must be an adaptation But such was not the case I found almost word for word Chekhov s characteristic it seemed to me in Mr Young s translation The reason the American public loves and understands the play is that it is like Chekhov in English

With half a dozen translations of Chekhov s plays available plus the dictionary we could hardly say that most of the bare meanings are not close enough to hand A great part of the mischance that has fallen to Chekhov s lines has not however been a matter of mere vocabulary The vocabulary could hardly be simpler than it is in Chekhov In fact the directors of the theatre where his plays were to be giv n wondered what to do about uttering these simplest of phrases simply And Stanislavsky has told us in writing that when he came to producing *The Sea Gull* he did not know any way to proceed he found the words too simple That was in 1896 Of all the dramatists Chekhov least deserves the muddle of the various styles that have been foisted on him in English—the involved for instance or the elevated or the psychological gloomy or the turgid soulful or the flat or the lacking in lyricism or in wit

We can get a hint of what can happen to him even in the young lady s speech to her adored author In the Russian she says You work too hard and have no time left to feel your own importance the translated young lady says You are overworked and you have not the

leisure nor the desire to appreciate your own significance." In one translation this same young lady, instead of saying that evidently the play is not going on, soars into apparently there s to be no continuation " And the remark that every one writes as he wants to and as he can" becomes every one writes in accordance with his desire and his capacity Mr Brooks Atkinson has exactly the right word for it when he speaks of how *opaque* some of the translations are that we have taken for granted.

I must cite one or two among many instances where the translator clearly prefers his own style to Chekhov s For example what the speech says in Russian is, I fall always more and more behind, like a peasant missing his train and the upshot is I can write only landscape and in all the rest I am false and false to the marrow of my bones The translator undertakes to improve on that "I am left behind them like a peasant missing his train at a station and finally I come back to the conclusion that all I am fit for is to describe landscapes, and that whatever else I attempt rings abominably false. If that seems unbelievable, it is less so perhaps than when Sonia s lovely line in *Uncle Vanya* We shall see the whole sky all diamonds is turned into We shall see all Heaven lit with radiance

Chekhov has many dramatic devices—repetitions, parallels, balances and so on—which are caught or missed according to the translator There is, too, the matter of sayability, that possibility of speaking the lines on the stage, as many an actor to his joy or sorrow has found out There are plentiful illustrations of this in various translations, but short examples will make the point just as well In *The Sea Gull* Chekhov s actress shouts at the farm manager—and this is the exact order, number

words and punctuation of her speech— What horses? How should I know? What horses! One translation has it What horses? How can I tell which? That may seem a simple change but try and shout it Or where the farm manager in a rage has to shout back at her You don t know what a farm means! try shouting You don t know what the management of an estate involves! Why such renderings are preferred to Chekhov s simple lines would be hard to explain

Comparisons among the four plays in this volume are of course possible and not hard to make Critics have noted that a play of Chekhov s is not a mixture of the spirit of comedy and the spirit of tragedy it can fall only within some softer less sharply defined mood Chekhov s most impressive creation in the art of the drama consists in his power to create such a mood I should say that in the creation of this particular mood wit *per se* played a great part the rest being mostly played by Chekhov s lyricism—the music of his profound and gentle humanity This mood is most evident in *The Three Sist rs* and *The Cherry Orchard* and causes them to be for many people the bes beloved of his plays They have more fragrance as it were more of that fanciful recklessness and those impetuous springs of emotion that so many people have come to think of and love as Chekhov *Uncle Vanya* may be deeper in its creation and portrayal of the characters which here are passionately seen and as passionately to be acted Certainly it has more of a dramatic line running through it than the other two plays *The Sea Gull* coming earlier in 1896 is no doubt less fully Chekhov than the later plays It has more of the qualities and motivations to be found in European drama generally It is also

more immediately actable than the three other plays and is closer to the taste of our theatre in the West

In Chekhov the thought is not so often in one speech only, it is in the combination of speeches And the sequence of the speeches is part of the whole idea or dramatic movement Chekhov's subtlety needs constant watching by the actors and the director, there is a deceptive economy in every speech or emotional reference or transition They are elusive and at times seemingly vague but they are also as exact as the beating of your pulse This dramatic writing is diffused, and is lighter than down, is suddenly dark and pathetic, is all at once luminous and beautiful A hovering life lies over the scenes and a strange and living pressure emerges Chekhov is like a wise, evenly balanced doctor who takes all in his stride He can portray the human scene without bitterness harsh theories or sentimental indulgence For this very reason—the fact that life is so vividly apparent and expressed in him—Chekhov should never seem to be really depressing

Biographical Note

Anton Chekhov was born in Taganrog, an old port on the Sea of Azov, on January 17, 1860 He was of Russian peasant stock, but his grandfather had bought the freedom of the family During his student days at the University of Moscow, from which he received his degree in medicine in 1884, he began writing short stories under the pen name of Antosha Chekhonte

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Among the earlier translations of Chekhov's plays we may list those by Constance Garnett, Julius West, George Calderon, Marian Fell and S S Koteliansky

For advice and assistance in my translations I must thank Mrs Catherine Burland, a widely read Russian lady living in this country

The Sea Gull

CHARACTERS

IRINA NIKOLAEVNA ARKADINA MADAME TREPLEFF *an actress*

KONSTANTINE GAVRILOVICH TREPLEFF *her son*

PETER NIKOLAEVICH SORIN *her brother*

NINA MIKHAILOVNA ZARYECHNY *a young girl the daughter of a wealthy landowner*

ILYA AFANASEVICH SHAMREYEFF *a retired lieutenant Sorin's steward*

PAULINE ANDREEVNA *his wife*

MASHA (MARIA ILYINISHNA) *his daughter*

BORIS ALEXEEVICH TRIGORIN *a literary man*

EUGENE SERGEEVICH DORN *a doctor*

SEMYON SEMYONOVICH MEDVEDENKO *a schoolmaster*

YAKOV *a laborer*

COOK

Two housemaids

ACT ONE

A section of the park on SORIN s *estate The wide avenue leading away from the spectators into the depths of the park toward the lake is closed by a platform hurriedly put together for private theatricals so that the lake is not seen at all To left and right of the platform there are bushes A few chairs a small table*

The sun has just set On the platform behind the curtain are YAKOV *and other workmen sounds of coughing and hammering are heard* MASHA *and* MEDVEDENKO *enter on the left returning from a walk*

MEDVEDENKO Why do you always wear black?

MASHA I am in mourning for my life I m unhappy

MEDVEDENKO You unhappy? I can t understand it Your health is good, and your father is not rich but he s well enough off My life is much harder to bear than yours I get twenty three roubles a month, and that s all, and then out of that the pension fund has to be deducted, but I don t wear mourning

(*They sit down*)

MASHA It isn t a question of money Even a beggar can be happy

MEDVEDENKO Yes, theoretically he can, but not when you come right down to it. Look at me, with my mother,

my two sisters and my little brother and my salary twenty three roubles in all Well people have to eat and drink dont they? Have to have tea and sugar? Have tobacco? So it just goes round and round

MASHA (*Glancing toward the stage*) The play will begin soon

MEDVEDENKO Yes The acting will be done by Nina Zaryechny and the play was written by Konstantine Gavrilovich They are in love with each other and today their souls are mingled in a longing to create some image both can share and true to both But my soul and your soul cant find any ground to meet on You see how it is I love you I cant stay at home because I keep wishing so for you and so every day I walk four miles here and four miles back and meet with nothing but indifference on your part Thats only natural I ve got nothing we re a big family Who wants to marry a man who cant even feed himself?

MASHA Fiddlesticks! (*She takes snuff*) Your love touches me but I cant return it thats all (*Offers him snuff*) Help yourself

MEDVEDENKO I d as soon not.

(*A pause*)

MASHA My how close it is! It must be going to storm tonight All you do is philosophize or talk about money You think the worst misery we can have is poverty But I think its a thousand times easier to go ragged and beg for bread than But you d never understand that

(*Enter* SORIN *leaning on his walking stick and* TREPLEFF)

SORIN For some reason who knows my dear boy the country s not my style Naturally You cant teach an

old horse new tricks Last night I went to bed at ten o clock, and at nine this morning I awoke feeling as if my brain stuck to my skull and so on (*Laughing*) And then on top of all that I fell asleep after dinner just the same And so now I m a wreck, I m still lost in a nightmare, and all the rest of it

TREPLEFF That s true, Uncle, you really ought to live in town (*Sees* MASHA *and* MEDVEDENKO) Look my friends, we ll call you when the play starts but don t stay here now I ll have to ask you to go

SORIN (*To* MASHA) Maria Ilyinishna, won t you kindly ask your father to leave that dog unchained, to stop that howling? All last night again my sister couldn t sleep

MASHA You ll have to tell my father yourself I shan t do it, so please don t ask me to (*To* MEDVEDENKO) Let s go

MEDVEDENKO Then you ll let us know before the play starts

(MASHA *and* MEDVEDENKO *go out*)

SORIN That just means the dog will howl all night again You see how tis in the country I have never had what I wanted It used to be I d get leave for twenty-eight days, say, and come down here to recoup and so on, but they plagued me so with one silly piece of nonsense after another that the very first day I wanted to be out of it (*Laughs*) I ve always left here with relish Well now that I m retired, I have nowhere to go and all the rest of it Like it—like it not, I live

YAKOV We re going for a swim Konstantine Gavrilovich

TREPLEFF So long as you are back in ten minutes (*Looks at his watch*) We re about to begin

YAKOV Yes, sir

TREPLEFF Here s your theatre The curtain then the first wing then the second wing and still further open space No scenery at all You see what the background is—it stretches to the lake and on to the horizon And the curtain will go up at 8 30 just when the moon s rising

SORIN Magnificent!

TREPLEFF If Nina s late then of course the whole effect will be spoilt It s time she was here now But her father and stepmother watch her so she can hardly get out of the house it s like escaping from prison (*Straightening his uncle s tie*) Uncle your hair and beard are rumpled up—you ought to have them trimmed

SORIN (*Combing his bea d*) It s the tragedy of my life I always look as if I d been drunk even when I was young I did—and so on Women never have loved me (*Sits down*) Why is my sister in such bad humor?

TREPLEFF Why? Bored (*S s down by* SORIN) Jealous She s set against me again the performance and against my play because Nina going to act in it and she s not She s never read my play but she hates it.

SORIN You (*Laughing*) imagine things really

TREPLEFF Yes she s furious because even on this little stage it s Nina will have a success and not she (*Looks at his watch*) A psychological case my mother She s undeniably talented intelligent capable of sobbing over a novel she recites all of Nekrasov s poetry by heart she nurses the sick like an angel but you just try praising Duse to her oh ho! You praise nobody but her write about her rave about her go into ecstasies over her marvelous performance in *La Dame Aux Camelias* or in *The Fumes of Life* But all that is a

drug she can t get in the country, so she s bored and cross We are all her enemies—it s all our fault And then she s superstitious afraid of three candles or number thirteen She s stingy She s got seventy thousand roubles in an Odessa bank—I know that for a fact. But ask her for a loan, she ll burst into tears

SORIN *You ve got it into your head your play annoys* your mother, and that upsets you, and so on Don t worry, your mother worships the ground you walk on

TREPLEFF (*Picking petals from a flower*) Loves me—loves me not, loves me—loves me not, loves me—loves me not. (*Laughing*) You see, my mother doesn t love me, of course not I should say not! What she wants is to live, and love, and wear pretty clothes and here I am twenty five years old and a perpetual reminder that she s no longer young You see, when I m not there she s only thirty two, and when I am she s forty three and for that she hates me. She knows too that I refuse to admit the theatre. She loves the theatre it seems to her that she s working for humanity, for holy art. But to my thinking her theatre today is nothing but routine, convention When the curtain goes up, and by artificial light in a room with three walls these great geniuses these priests of holy art, show how people eat, drink, make love, move about and wear their jackets when they try to fish a moral out of these flat pictures and phrases some sweet little bit anybody could understand and any fool take home, when in a thousand different dishes they serve me the same thing over and over, over and over, over and over—well, it s then I run and run like Maupassant from the Eiffel Tower and all that vulgarity about to bury him

SORIN But we can t do without the theatre

TREPLEFF We must have new forms New forms we must have and if we can t get them we d better have nothing at all (*He looks at his watch*) I love my mother I love her very much but she leads a senseless life always making a fuss over this novelist her name forever chucked about in the papers it disgusts me It s merely the simple egotism of an ordinary mortal I suppose stirring me up sometimes that makes me wish I had somebody besides a famous actress for a mother and fancy if she had been an ordinary woman I d have been happier Uncle can you imagine anything more hopeless than my position is in her house? It used to be she d entertain all famous people actors and authors—and among them all I was the only one who was nothing and they put up with me only because I was her son Who am I? What am I? I left the university in my third year owing to circumstances as they say for which the editors are not responsible I ve no talent at all not a kopeck on me and according to my passport I am—a burgher of Kiev My father as you know was a burgher of Kiev though he was also a famous actor So when these actors and writers of hers bestowed on me their gracious attentions it seemed to me their eyes were measuring my insignificance—I guessed their thoughts and felt humiliated

SORIN By the by listen can you please tell me what sort of man this novelist is? You see I can t make him out He never opens his mouth

TREPLEFF He s an intelligent man he s simple apt to be melancholy Quite decent He s well under forty yet but he s already celebrated he s had more than enough of

everything As for his writings well, we ll say *charming, full of talent, but after Tolstoi or Zola,* of course, a little of Trigorin goes a long way

SORIN My boy, I m fond of writers, you know Once there were two things I wanted passionately To marry and to be an author I never succeeded in doing either It must be pleasant being a minor writer even, and all the rest of it

TREPLEFF I hear footsteps (*Embraces his uncle*) I can t live without her Just the sound of her footsteps is lovely (*Going to meet* NINA ZARYECHNY *as she enters*) I m insanely happy! My enchantress! My dream!

NINA I m not late Surely I m not late

TREPLEFF (*Kissing her hands*) No, no, no

NINA All day I worried, was so frightened I was so afraid father wouldn t let me come But at last he s gone out He went out just now with my stepmother The sky has turned red, the moon will soon be up, and I raced the horse, raced him (*Laughs*) But I m so happy (*Warmly shaking* SORIN s *hand*)

SORIN (*Laughing*) You ve been crying I see by your little eyes That s not fair

NINA That s so You can see how out of breath I am Do let s hurry I've got to go in half an hour I must Don t ask me to stay, my father doesn t know I m here

TREPLEFF It s time to begin anyhow I ll go call them

SORIN I ll go I ll go this minute (*Begins to sing The Two Grenadiers then stops*) Once I started singing like that and a deputy who was standing by said, Your Excellency has a very strong voice then he thought awhile and said, Strong but unpleasant" (*Exits laughing*)

NINA My father and his wife won t let me come here they say it s Bohemia They are afraid I ll go on the stage But I am drawn here to this lake like a sea gull My heart is full of you.

TREPLEFF We re alone

NINA Isn t that someone over there?

TREPLEFF No nobody (*Kisses her*)

NINA What kind of tree is that?

TREPLEFF It s an elm

NINA Why does it look so dark?

TREPLEFF Because it s evening and everything looks darker Don t go away early please don t

NINA I must

TREPLEFF But if I should follow you Nina? I ll stand all night in the garden looking up at your window

NINA Oh no! You mustn t The watchman would see you and Treasure doesn t know you yet he d bark

TREPLEFF I love you

NINA Ssh !

TREPLEFF Who s that? You, Yakov?

YAKOV (*From behind stage*) Yes sir

TREPLEFF You must get to your seats it s time to begin The moon s coming up

YAKOV Yes sir

TREPLEFF Have you got that methylated spirits? Is the sulphur ready? (*To* NINA) You see when the red eyes appear there must be a smell of sulphur around You d better go now everything s ready Do you feel nervous?

NINA Yes awfully It s not that I m afraid of your mother so much it s Boris Trigorin terrifies me acting before him a famous author like him Tell me is he young?

TREPLEFF Yes

NINA What marvelous stories he writes!

TREPLEFF (*Coldly*) I don't know I don't read them

NINA It s hard to act in your play There are no living characters in it

TREPLEFF Living characters! I must represent life not as it is and not as it should be, but as it appears in my dreams

NINA In your play there s no action, it s all recitation It seems to me a play must have some love in it

(*They go out by way of the stage Enter* PAULINE ANDREEVNA *and* DORN)

PAULINE It's getting damp, go back and put on your galoshes

DORN I m hot

PAULINE You don t take any care of yourself and it s just contrariness You re a doctor and know very well how bad damp air is for you, but you like to make me miserable You sat out on that terrace all last evening on purpose

DORN (*Sings low*) Oh, never say that I

PAULINE You were so enchanted by Madame Arkadina s conversation you didn t even notice the cold You may as well own up—she charms you

DORN I m fifty five

PAULINE Fiddlesticks! What s that for a man, it s not old You re still young enough looking, women still like you

DORN (*Gently*) Tell me, what is it you want?

PAULINE Before an actress you are all ready to kiss the ground All of you!

DORN (*Sings low*) Once more I stand before thee If society does make a fuss over actors, treats them differently from say shopkeepers—it s only right and natural That s the pursuit of the ideal

PAULINE Women have always fallen in love with you and hung on your ne k Is that the pursuit of the ideal too?

DORN (*Shrugs his shoulders*) Why? In the relations women have had with me there has been a great deal that was fine What they chiefly loved in me was the fact that I was a first class doctor for childbirths Ten or fifteen years ago you remember I was the only de ent accoucheur they had in all this part of the country Besides I ve always been an honorable man

PAULINE (*Clasping his hand*) My dear!

DORN Ssh here they com !

(*Enter* MADAME ARKADINA *on* SORIN S *arm* TRIGORIN SHAMREYEFF MEDVEDENKO *and* MASHA)

SHAMREYEFF In 73 at the Poltava Fair pure delight I can assure you she was magnificent ah magnifi cent! Pure delight! But tell me if you know where Chadin Paul Semyonovich the comedian *is now?* Take his Raspluyef twas better than Sadovsl y s I can assure you most esteemed lady But what s be come of him?

ARKADIN You keep asking me about someone before the flood how should I know? (*Sits down*)

SHAMREYEFF Ah (*Sighs*) Paulie Chadin! Nobody like that now The stage is not what it was Irina Niko laevna ah no! In those days there were mighty oaks now we have nothing but stumps

DORN There are not many brilliant talents nowadays it s true but the general average of the acting is much higher

SHAMREYEFF I can t agree with you there However that s a matter of taste *De gustibus ai t bene aut nihil*

(TREPLEFF *comes out from behind the stage*)

ARKADINA My dear son, when does it begin?

TREPLEFF Please be patient It s only a moment

ARKADINA (*Reciting from* Hamlet) My son!
Thou turnst mine eyes into my very soul,
And there I see such black and grained spots
As will not leave their tinct

TREPLEFF (*Paraphrasing from* Hamlet) Nay, but to live in wickedness, seek love in the depths of sin (*Behind the stage a horn blows*) Ladies and gentlemen, we begin! I beg your attention (*A pause*) I begin (*Tapping the floor with a stick In a loud voice*) Harken ye mists, out of ancient time, that drift by night over the bosom of this lake, darken our eyes with sleep and in our dream show us what will be in 200,000 years

SORIN In 200,000 years nothing will be

TREPLEFF Then let them present to us that nothing

ARKADINA Let them We are asleep

(*The curtain rises Vista opens across the lake Low on the horizon the moon hangs reflected in the water* NINA ZARYECHNY *all in white seated on a rock*)

NINA Men and beasts, lions, eagles and partridges, antlered deer mute fishes dwelling in the water, starfish and small creatures invisible to the eye these and all life have run their sad course and are no more Thousands of creatures have come and gone since there was life on the earth Vainly now the pallid moon doth light her lamp In the meadows the cranes wake and cry no longer, and the beetles hum is silent in the linden groves Cold cold, cold Empty, empty empty! Terrible, terrible, terrible (*A pause*) Living bodies have crumbled to dust, and Eternal Matter has changed

them into stones and water and clouds and there is one soul of many souls I am that soul of the world In me the soul of Alexander the Great, of Cæsar of Shakespeare, of Napoleon and of the lowest worm The mind of man and the brute s instinct mingle in me I remember all all and in me lives each several life again

(*The will-o the wisps appear*)

ARKADINA (*In a stage whisper*) We re in for something decadent.

TREPLEFF (*Imploring and reproach ng*) Mother!

NINA I am alone Once in a hundred years I open my lips to speak and in this void my sad echo is unheard And you pale fires you do not hear me Before daybreak the putrid marsh begets you and you wander until sunrise but without thought without will with out the throb of life For fear life should *spring in* you the father of Eternal Matter the Devil causes every instant in you as in stones and in water an interchange of the atoms and you are changing endlessly I only the world s soul *remain* unchanged and am eternal (*A pause*) I am like a prisoner cast into a deep empty well and know not where I am nor what awaits me One thing only is not hidden from me in the stubborn savage fight with the Devil the principle of material forces I am destined to conquer and when that has been matter and spirit shall be made one in the shadow of my soul forever And lo the *kingdom* of universal will *is* at hand But that cannot be before long centuries of the moon the shining dog star and the earth have run to dust And till that time horror shall be horror horror horror! (*A pause upon the background of the lake appear two red spots*) Behold my mighty adver

sary, the Devil, approaches I see his awful, blood red eyes

ARKADINA I smell sulphur, is that necessary?

TREPLEFF Yes, it is

ARKADINA (*Laughing*) Yes, it s a stage effect!

TREPLEFF Mother!

NINA But without man he is lost

PAULINE (*To* DORN) You re taking your hat off Put it on, you ll catch cold

ARKADINA The doctor has taken off his hat to the Devil, the father of Eternal Matter?

TREPLEFF (*Blazing up in a loud voice*) The play s over! That s enough! Curtain!

ARKADINA Why are you angry?

TREPLEFF That s enough Curtain! Drop the curtain! (*Stamping his foot*) Curtain! (*The curtain falls*) You must excuse me! I don t know how it was but I forgot somehow that only a chosen few can write plays and act them I was infringing on a monopoly My I (*Instead of saying more he makes a gesture of having done with it and goes out to the left*)

ARKADINA What s the matter with him?

SORIN Irina, my dear, you mustn t treat a young man s pride like that

ARKADINA Now what have I said?

SORIN You ve hurt his feelings

ARKADINA But he told us beforehand it was all in fun, that s the way I took it of course

SORIN All the same

ARKADINA And now it appears he s produced a master piece Well, I declare! Evidently he had no intention of amusing us not at all, he got up this performance and fumigated us with sulphur to demonstrate to us

how plays should be written and what s worth acting in I m sick of him Nobody could stand his everlasting digs and outbursts He s an unruly conceited boy

SORIN He was only hoping to give you some pleasure

ARKADINA Yes? I notice he didn t choose some familiar sort of play but forced his own decadent raving on us I can listen to raving I don t mind listening to it so long as I m not asked to take it seriously but this of his is not like that Not at all it s introducing us to a new epoch in art inaugurating a new era in art But to my mind it s not new forms or epochs it s simply bad temper

TRIGORIN Everyone writes as he wants to and as he can

ARKADINA Well let him write as he wants to and as he can so long as he leaves me out of it

DORN Great Jove angry is no longer Jove

ARKADINA I m not Jove I m a woman (*Lighting a cigarette*) I m not angry I m merely vexed to see a young man wasting his time so I didn t mean to hurt him

MEDVEDENKO Nobody has any grounds for separating matter from spirit for it may be this very spirit itself is a union of material atoms (*Excitedly to* TRIGORIN) You know somebody ought to put in a play and then act on the stage how we poor schoolmasters live It s a hard hard life

ARKADINA That s so but we shan t talk of plays or atoms The evening is so lovely Listen they re singing! (*Pausing to listen*) How good it is!

PAULINE It s on the other side of the lake

(*A pause*)

ARKADINA Sit down by me here (*To* TRIGORIN) You

know, ten or fifteen years ago we had music on this lake every night almost There were six big country houses then around the shore, and it was all laughter, noise, shooting and lovemaking making love without end The *jeune premier* and the idol of all six houses was our friend here, I must present (*Nods to ward* DORN) Doctor Eugene Sergeevich He s charming now, but then he was irresistible Why did I hurt my poor boy s feelings? I m worried about him (*Calls*) Kostya! Son! Kostya!

MASHA I ll go look for him

ARKADINA Would you, my dear?

MASHA (*Calling*) Ah-oo! Konstantine Ah-oo! (*She goes out*)

NINA (*Coming from behind the stage*) Evidently we're not going on, so I may as well come out Good evening! (*Kisses* MADAME ARKADINA *and* PAULINE ANDREEVNA)

SORIN Bravo! Bravo!

ARKADINA Bravo! Bravo! We were all enchanted With such looks and such a lovely voice, it s a sin for you to stay here in the country You have talent indeed Do you hear? You owe it to yourself to go on the stage

NINA Oh, that s my dream (*Sighing*) But it will never come true

ARKADINA Who can tell? Let me present Boris Alexe evich Trigorin

NINA Oh, I m so glad (*Much embarrassed*) I m al ways reading your

ARKADINA (*Drawing* NINA *down beside her*) Don t be shy, dear He may be a famous author, but his heart s quite simple Look, he s embarrassed too

DORN I suppose we may raise the curtain now This way it s frightening

how plays should be written and what s worth acting in I m sick of him Nobody could stand his everlasting digs and outbursts He s an unruly conceited boy

SORIN He was only hoping to give you some pleasure

ARKADINA Yes? I notice he didn t choose some familiar sort of play but forced his own decadent raving on us I can listen to raving I don t mind listening to it so long as I m not asked to take it seriously but this of his is not like that Not at all it s introducing us to a new epoch in art inaugurating a new era in art But to my mind it s not new forms or epochs it s simply bad temper

TRIGORIN Everyone writes as he wants to and as he can

ARKADINA Well let him write as he wants to and as he can so long as he leaves me out of it

DORN Great Jove angry is no longer Jove

ARKADINA I m not Jove I m a woman (*Lighting a cigarette*) I m not angry I m merely vexed to see a young man wasting his time so I didn t mean to hurt him

MEDVEDENKO Nobody has any grounds for separating matter from spirit for it may be this very spirit itself is a union of material atoms (*Excitedly to* TRIGORIN) You know somebody ought to put in a play and then act on the stage how we poor schoolmasters live It s a hard hard life

ARKADINA That s so but we shan t talk of plays or atoms The evening is so lovely Listen they re singing! (*Pausing to listen*) How good it is!

PAULINE It s on the other side of the lake

(*A pause*)

ARKADINA Sit down by me here (*To* TRIGORIN) You

know, ten or fifteen years ago we had music on this lake every night almost There were six big coun r houses then around the shore, and it was all laugh.e-, noise, shooting and lovemaking mal ing lo.e without end The *jeune premier* and the idol of all six houses was our friend here, I must present (*Nods toward* DORN) Doctor Eugene Sergeevich He s charming now, but then he was irresistible Why did I hurt my poor boy s feelings? I m worried about him (*Calls*) Kostya! Son! Kostya!

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DORN I suppose we may raise the curtain now This way it's frightening

SHAMREYEFF (*Loudly*) Yakov my man raise the curtain!

(*The curtain is raised*)

NINA (*To* TRIGORIN) It s a strange play isn t it?

TRIGORIN I didn t understand a word of it However I enjoyed watching it You acted with so much sincerity and the scenery was so lovely (*A pause*) I dare say there are quantities of fish in this lake

NINA Yes

TRIGORIN I love fishing I can think of no greater pleasure than to sit along towards evening by the water and watch a float

NINA But I d have thought that for anyone who had tasted the joy of creation no other pleasures could exist

ARKADINA (*Laughing*) Don t talk like that. When people make him pretty speeches he simply crumples up

SHAMREYEFF I remember one evening at the Opera in Moscow when the celebrated Silva was singing how delighted we were when he took low C. Imagine our surprise it so happened the bass from our church choir was there and all at once we heard Bravo Silva from the gallery a whole octave lower like this Bravo Silva The audience was thunderstruck

(*A pause*)

DORN The angel of silence is flying over us

NINA Oh I must go Good by

ARKADINA Where to? Where so early? We won t allow it

NINA Papa is waiting for me

ARKADINA What a man really! (*Kissing her*) Well, there s no help for it. It s too sad losing you

NINA If you only knew how I don t want to go

ARKADINA Somebody must see you home, child

NINA (*Frightened*) Oh, no, no

SORIN (*Imploring her*) Don t go

NINA I must, Peter Nikolaevich

SORIN Stay an hour more, and so on Come now, really

NINA (*Hesitating with tears in her eyes*) I can't! (*She shakes hands and hurries out*)

ARKADINA Now there s a really poor, unfortunate girl They say her mother when she died willed the husband all her immense fortune, everything to the very last kopeck, and now this little girl is left with nothing since her father has already willed everything he has to the second wife That s shocking

DORN Yes, her papa is rather a beast, I must grant him that

SORIN (*Rubbing his hands to warm them*) What do you say we d better go in too, it s getting damp My legs ache

ARKADINA It s like having wooden legs, you can hardly walk on them Come on, you poor old patriarch (*She takes his arm*)

SHAMREYEFF (*Offering his arm to his wife*) Madame?

SORIN There s that dog howling again (*To* SHAMREYEFF) Be good enough Ilya Afanasevich, to tell them to let that dog off the chain

SHAMREYEFF It can t be done, Peter Nikolaevich, or we ll be having thieves in the barn, and the millet s there. (*To* MEDVEDENKO *walking beside him*) Yes, a whole octave lower Bravo Silva ! And not your concert singer, mind you just ordinary church choir

MEDVEDENKO And what salary does a church singer get?

(*All except* DORN *go out*)

DORN (*Alone*) I don t know maybe I m no judge, I

may be going off my head but I liked that play There s something in it When the girl spoke of the vast soli tude and afterward when the Devil s eyes appeared I could feel my hands trembling It was all so fresh and naive But here he comes I want to say all the nice things I can to him

(*Enter* TREPLEFF)

TREPLEFF They ve all gone

DORN I m here

TREPLEFF Masha s been hunting for me all over the park Unbearable creature!

DORN Konstantine Gavrilovich I admired your play ex tremely It s a curious kind of thing and I haven t heard the end but still it made a deep impression on me You ve got great talent You must keep on! (KON STANTINE *presses his hand and embraces him impul sively*) Phew what a nervous fellow! Tears in his eyes! What I wanted to say is you chose your subject from the realm of abstract ideas and that s right a work of art should express a great idea There is no beauty without seriousness My you are pale!

TREPLEFF So you think I ought to go on?

DORN Yes But write only of what is profound and eter nal You know how I have lived my life I have lived it with variety and choiceness and I have enjoyed it and I am content. But if ever I had felt the elevation of spirit that comes to artists in their creative moments I believe I should have despised this body and all its usages and tried to soar above all earthly things

TREPLEFF Forgive me where s Nina?

DORN And another thing In a work of art there must be a clear definite idea You must know what your object

is in writing, for if you follow that picturesque road without a definite aim, you will go astray and your talent will be your ruin

TREPLEFF (*Impatiently*) Where is Nina?

DORN She s gone home

TREPLEFF (*In despair*) What shall I do? I want to see her I *must* see her I m going

(MASHA *enters*)

DORN Calm yourself, my friend!

TREPLEFF But all the same I m going I must go

MASHA Konstantine Gavrilovich come indoors Your mother wants you She s anxious

TREPLEFF Tell her I ve gone and please all of you let me alone! Don t follow me around

DORN Come, come, come, boy, you mustn t act like this it won t do

TREPLEFF (*In tears*) Good by, Doctor and thank you (*Exits*)

DORN (*Sighing*) Ah youth, youth

MASHA When there is nothing else left to say people always say, Ah, youth, youth (*Takes a pinch of snuff*)

DORN (*Takes snuffbox out of her hand and flings it into the bushes*) It s disgusting (*A pause*) There in the house they seem to be playing We d better go in

MASHA No no wait a minute

DORN What is it?

MASHA Let me talk to you I don t love my father I can t talk to him, but I feel with all my heart that you are near me Help me help me (*Starts to sob*) or I shall do something silly I ll make my life a mockery, ruin it I can t keep on

DORN How? Help you how?

may be going off my head but I liked that play There s something in it When the girl spoke of the vast solitude and afterward when the Devil s eyes appeared I could feel my hands trembling It was all so fresh and naive But here he comes I want to say all the nice things I can to him

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TREPLEFF Forgive me, where s Nina?

DORN And another thing In a work of art there must be a clear definite idea You must know what your object

along after me like an endless train Often I have no wish to be living at all (*Sits down*) Of course that s all nonsense I ought to shake myself and throw it all off

DORN (*Sings softly*) Tell her, pretty flowers

ARKADINA Then I m correct as an Englishman I m always dressed and my hair always *comme il faut* Would I permit myself to leave the house even to come out here in the garden, in a dressing gown or with my hair blowzy? Never, I should say not! The reason I have kept my looks is because I ve never been a frump, never let myself go, as some do (*Arms akimbo she walks up and down the croquet green*) Here I am, light as a bird Ready to play a girl of fifteen any day

DORN Well at any rate, I ll go on with my reading (*Takes up the book*) We stopped at the corn merchants and the rats

ARKADINA And the rats Go on (*Sits*) Let me have it I'll read It s my turn anyhow (*She takes the book and looks for the place*) And the rats here we are (*Reads*) And certainly for people of the world to pamper the romantics and make them at home in their houses is as dangerous as for corn merchants to raise rats in their granaries And yet they are beloved And so when a woman has picked out the author she wants to entrap, she besieges him with compliments, amenities and favors Well among the French that may be, but certainly here with us there s nothing of the kind we ve no set program Here with us a woman before she ever sets out to capture an author is usually head over heels in love with him herself To go no further take me and Trigorin

(*Enter* SORIN *leaning on a stick with* NINA *at* h

side MEDVEDENKO *follows him pushing a wheel chair*)

SORIN (*Caressingly as if to a child*) Yes? We re all joy eh? We re happy today after all (*To his sister*) We re all joy Father and Stepmother are gone to Tver and we are free now for three whole days

NINA (*Sits down beside* ARKADINA *and embraces her*) I am so happy! I belong now to you

SORIN (*Sitting down in the wheel chair*) She looks lovely today

ARKADINA Beautifully dressed intriguing that s a clever girl (*She kisses* NINA) We mustn t praise her too much It s bad luck Where s Boris Alexeevich?

NINA He s at the bathhouse fishing

ARKADINA You d think he d be sick of it (*She begins reading again*)

NINA What is that you have?

ARKADINA Maupassant s On the Water darling (*Reads a few lines to herself*) Well the rest is uninteresting and untrue (*Shutting the book*) I m troubled in my soul Tell me what s the matter with my son? Why is he so sad and morose He spends day after day on the lake and I hardly ever see him any more

MASHA His heart s troubled (*To* NINA *timidly*) Please Nina read something out of his play won t you?

NINA (*Shrugging her shoulders*) You really want me to? It s so uninteresting

MASHA (*With restrained eagerness*) When he recites anything his eyes shine and his face grows pale He has a beautiful sad voice and a manner like a poet s

(*Sound of* SORIN s *snoring*)

DORN Pleasant dreams

ARKADINA (*To* SORIN) Petrusha!

SORIN Eh?

ARKADINA Are you asleep?

SORIN Not at all

(*A pause*)

ARKADINA You are not following any treatment for your self, that s not right, brother

SORIN I d be glad to follow a treatment, but the doctor won t give me any

DORN Take care of yourself at sixty!

SORIN Even at sixty a man wants to live

DORN (*Impatiently*) Bah! Take your valerian drops

ARKADINA I d think it would do him good to take a cure at some springs

DORN Well he might take it. He might not take it.

ARKADINA Try and understand that!

DORN Nothing to understand It s all clear

(*A pause*)

MEDVEDENKO Peter Nikolaevich ought to give up smok ing

SORIN Fiddlesticks!

DORN No, it s not fiddlesticks! Wine and tobacco rob us of our personality After a cigar or a vodka you re not Peter Nikolaevich you re Peter Nikolaevich plus somebody else, your ego splits up and you begin to see yourself as a third person

SORIN Fine (*Laughs*) for you to argue! You ve lived your life but what about me? I ve served the Depart ment of Justice twenty-eight years but I ve never lived never seen anything and all the rest of it so naturally I want to have my life You ve had your fill and that s why you turn to philosophy I want to live, and that s why I turn to sherry and smoking cigars after dinner, and so on And that s that

DORN One must look seriously at life but to go in for cures at sixty and regret the pleasures you missed in your youth is if you ll forgive me frivolous

MASHA (*Gets up*) It must be time for lunch (*Walking slow and hobbling*) My foot s gone to sleep (*Exits*)

DORN She ll down a couple of glasses before lunch

SORIN The poor thing gets no happiness of her own

DORN Fiddlesticks your Excellency

SORIN You argue like a man who s had his fill

ARKADINA Oh what can be duller than this darling country dullness is! Hot quiet nobody ever does anything everybody philosophizes It s good to be here with you my friends delightful listening to you but sitting in my hotel room all by myself studying my part how much better!

NINA (*Ecstatically*) Good! I understand you

SORIN Of course in town s better You sit in your study the footman lets nobody in without announcing them there s the telephone on the street cabs and so on

DORN (*Singing sotto voce*) Tell her my flowers

(*Enter* SHAMREYEFF *behind him* PAULINE)

SHAMREYEFF Here they are Good morning! (*Kisses* MADAME ARKADINA S *hand then* NINA S) Very glad to see you looking so well (*To* MADAME ARKADINA) My wife tells me you are thinking of driving into town with her today Is that so?

ARKADINA Yes we are thinking of it

SHAMREYEFF Hm! That s magnificent but what will you travel on my most esteemed lady? T day around here we are hauling rye all the hands are busy And what horses would you take ma I ask?

ARKADINA What horses? How should I know what horses!

SORIN There are carriage horses here!

SHAMREYEFF (*Flaring up*) Carriage horses? But where do I get the harness? Where do I get the harness? It's amazing It's incomprehensible! Most esteemed lady! Excuse me, I am on my knees before your talent, I'd gladly give ten years of my life for you, but I cannot let you have the horses!

ARKADINA But what if I have to go? A fine business this is!

SHAMREYEFF Most esteemed lady! You don't know what a farm means

ARKADINA (*Flaring up*) The same old story! In that case I'll start for Moscow today Order me horses from the village, or I'll walk to the station

SHAMREYEFF (*Flaring up*) In that case I resign my position! Find yourself another steward! (*Exits*)

ARKADINA Every summer it's like this every summer here they insult me! I'll never put my foot here again! (*Goes out in the direction of the bath house Presently she is seen going into the house* TRIGORIN *follows with fishing rods and a pail*)

SORIN (*Flaring up*) This is insolent! The devil knows what it is! I'm sick of it, and so on Bring all the horses here this very minute!

NINA (*To* PAULINE) To refuse Irina Nikolaevna, the famous actress! Any little wish of hers the least whim is worth more than all your farm It's simply unbelievable!

PAULINE (*In despair*) What can I do? Put yourself in my shoes what can I do?

SORIN (*To* NINA) Let s go find my sister We ll all beg her not to leave us. Isn t that so? (*Looking in the di rection* SHAMREYEFF *u ent*) You insufferable man! Tyrant!

NINA (*Prevents his getting up*) Sit still sit still We ll wheel you (*She and* MEDVEDENKO *push the u heel chair*) Oh how awful it is!

SORIN Yes yes it s awful But he won t leave, I ll speak to him right off

(*They go ot t* DORN *and* PAULINE *remain*)

DORN People are certainly tiresome Really the thing to do of course is throw that husband of yours out by the neck but it will all end by this old woman Peter Nikolaevich and his sister s begging him to pardon them See if they don t

PAULINE He has put the carriage horses in the fields too And these misunderstandings happen every day If you only knew how it all upsets me It s making me sick you see how I'm trembling I can t bear his coarseness (*Entreating*) Eugene my darling light of my eyes take me with you Our time is passing we re not young any longer if if *only* we could for the rest of our lives at least *stop* conceal ing things stop

(*A pause*)

DORN I am fifty fi

PAULINE I know here are other close to *you to* take with you Forgive u of

bunch of fl

PAULINE I am miserable with jealousy Of course you are a doctor You can t escape women I understand

DORN (*To* NINA, *as she joins them*) What's happening?

NINA Irina Nikolaevna is crying and Peter Nikolaevich having his asthma

DORN (*Rising*) I must go and give them both some valerian drops

NINA (*Giving him the flowers*) Won't you?

DORN *Merci bien* (*Goes toward the house*)

PAULINE What pretty flowers! (*Nearing the house in a low voice*) Give me those flowers! Give me those flowers!

(*He hands her the flowers she tears them to pieces and flings them away They go into the house*)

NINA (*Alone*) How strange it is seeing a famous actress cry, and about such a little nothing! And isn t it strange that a famous author should sit all day long fishing? The darling of the public, his name in the papers every day, his photograph for sale in shop windows, his book translated into foreign languages, and he s delighted because he s caught two chub I imagined famous people were proud and distant, and that they despised the crowd, and used their fame and the glamour of their names to revenge themselves on the world for putting birth and money first But here I see them crying or fishing, playing cards, laughing or losing their tempers, like everybody else

(TREPLEFF *enters without a hat carrying a gun and a dead sea gull*)

TREPLEFF Are you here alone?

NINA Alone (TREPLEFF *lays the sea gull at her feet*) What does that mean?

SORIN (*To* NINA) Let s go find my sister We ll all beg her not to leave us Isn t that so? (*Looking in the di rection* SHAMREYEFF *went*) You insufferable man! Tyrant!

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(*A pause*)

DORN I am fifty five it s too late to change now

PAULINE I know you refuse me because there are other women close to you It s impossible for you to take them all with you I understand I apologize! Forgive me you are tired of me

(NINA *appears before the house picking a bunch of flowers*)

DORN No not all that

PAULINE I am miserable with jealousy Of course you are a doctor You can t escape women I understand

DORN (*To* NINA, *as she joins them*) What's happening?

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TREPLEFF I was low enough todav to kill this sea gull I lay it at your feet.

NINA Whats the matter with you? (*Picks up sea gull and looks at i*)

TREPLEFF (*Pause*) It s the way I ll soon end my own life

NINA I don t even recognize you

TREPLEFF Yes ever since I stopped recognizing you You ve changed toward me Your eyes are cold You hate to have me near you

NINA You are so irritable lately and you talk it s as if you were talking in symbols And this sea gull I suppose that s a symbol too Forgive me but I don t understand it (*Lays the sea gull on the seat*) I m too simple to understand you

TREPLEFF This began that evening when my play faile l so stup dly Women will never forgive failure I ve burnt it all every scrap of it If you only knew what I m going through! Your growing cold to me is terri ble unbelievable it s as if I had suddenly wal ed and found t is lake dried up and sunk in the ground You say you are too simple to understand me Oh what is there to understand? My play didn t catch your fancy you despise my kind of imagination you already con sider me commonplace insignificant like so many others (*Stamping his foot*) How well I understand it all how I understand it It s like a spike in mv brain may it be damned along with my pride which is suck ing my blood sucking it like a snake (*He sees* TRIC ORIN *who enters reading a book*) Here comes the real genius he walks like Hamlet and with a bool too (*Mimicking*) Words words, words This sun has hardly reached you and you are already smiling your

glance is melting in his rays I won t stand in your way (*He goes out*)

TRIGORIN (*Making notes in a book*) Takes snuff and drinks vodka, always wears black The schoolmaster in love with her

NINA Good morning, Boris Alexeevich!

TRIGORIN Good morning It seems that things have taken a turn we hadn t expected, so we are leaving today You and I aren t likely to meet again I m sorry I don t often meet young women young and charming I ve forgotten how one feels at eighteen or nineteen, I can t picture it very clearly, and so the girls I draw in my stories and novels are mostly wrong I d like to be in your shoes for just one hour to see things through your eyes, and find out just what sort of a little person you are

NINA And how I d like to be in your shoes!

TRIGORIN Why?

NINA To know how it feels being a famous genius What s it like being famous? How does it make you feel?

TRIGORIN How Nohow, I should think I d never thought about it (*Reflecting*) One of two things either you exaggerate my fame or else my fame hasn t made me feel it

NINA But if you read about yourself in the papers?

TRIGORIN When they praise me I m pleased when they abuse me, I feel whipped for a day or so

NINA It s a marvelous world! If you only knew how I envy you! Look how different different people s lots are! Some have all they can do to drag through their dull, obscure lives, they are all just alike all miserable,

others well you for instance have a bright interesting life that means something You are happy

TRIGORIN I? (*Shrugging his shoulders*) Hm I hear you speak of fame and happiness of a bright interesting life but for me that s all words pretty words that if you ll forgive my saying so mean about the same to me as candied fruits which I never eat You are very young and very kind

NINA Your life is beautiful

TRIGORIN I don t see anything so very beautiful about it (*Looks at his watch*) I must get to my writing Excuse me I m busy (*Laughs*) You ve stepped on my pet corn as they say and here I am beginning to get excited and a little cross At any rate let s talk Let s talk about my beautiful bright life Well where shall we begin? (*After reflecting a moment*) You know sometimes violent obsessions take hold of a man some fixed idea pursues him the moon for example day and night he thinks of nothing but the moon Well I have just such a moon Day and night one thought obsesses me I must be writing I must be writing I must be I ve scarcely finished one novel when somehow I m driven on to write another then a third and after the third a fourth I write incessantly and always at a breakneck speed and that s the only way I can write What s beautiful and bright about that I ask you? Oh what a wild life! Why now even I m here talking to you I m excited but every minute I remember that the story I haven t finished is there waiting for me I see that cloud up there it s shaped like a grand piano instantly a mental note I must remember to put that in my story a cloud sailing by grand piano A whiff of heliotrope Quickly I make note of it

cloying smell, widow s color put that in next time I describe a summer evening Every sentence, every word I say and you say, I lie in wait for it, snap it up for my literary storeroom it might come in handy

As soon as I put my work down I race off to the theatre or go fishing, hoping to find a rest, but not at all a new idea for a story comes rolling around in my head like a cannon ball, and I m back at my desk, and writing and writing and writing And it s always like that, everlastingly I have no rest from myself, and I feel that I am consuming my own life, that for the honey I m giving to someone in the void, I rob my best flowers of their pollen, I tear up those flowers and trample on their roots Do I seem mad? Do my friends seem to talk with me as they would to a sane man? What are you writing at now? What shall we have next? Over and over it s like that, till I think all this attention and praise is said only out of kindness to a sick man deceive him soothe him, and then any minute come stealing up behind and pack him off to the madhouse And in those years, my young best years, when I was beginning why then writing made my life a torment A minor writer especially when he s not successful, feels clumsy, he s all thumbs the world has no need for him his nerves are about to go he can t resist hanging around people in the arts where nobody knows him, or takes any notice of him, and he s afraid to look them straight in the eyes like a man with a passion for gambling who hasn t any money to play with I d never seen my readers but for some reason or other I pictured them as hating me and mistrusting me, I had a deathly fear of the public and when my first play was produced it seemed to me all the dark eyes in the audi

ence were looking at it with hostility and all the light eyes with frigid indifference Oh how awful that was! What torment it was!

NINA But surely the inspiration you feel and the creation itself of something must give you a moment of high sweet happiness don t they?

TRIGORIN Yes When I m writing I enjoy it and I enjoy reading my proofs but the minute it comes out I detest it I see it s not what I meant it to be I was wrong to write it at all and I m vexed and sick at heart about it (*Laughs*) Then the public reads it Yes charming clever Charming but nothing like Tolstoi A very fine thing but Turgenev s *Fathers and Sons* is finer To my dying day that s what it will be clever and charming charming and clever nothing more And when I m dead they ll be saying at my grave Here lies Trigorin a delightful writer but not so good as Turgenev

NINA Excuse me but I refuse to understand you You are simply spoiled by success

TRIGORIN What success? I have never pleased myself I don t like mys lf as a writer The worst of it is that I am in a sort of daze and often don t understand what I write I love this water here the trees the sky I feel nature it stirs in me a passion an irresistible de sire to write But I am not only a landscape painter I am a citizen too I love my country the people I feel that if I am a writer I ought to speak also of the people of their sufferings of their future speak of science of the rights of man and so forth and I speak of every thing I hurry up on all sides they are after me are annoyed at me I dash from side to side like a fox the hounds are baiting I see life and science getting always

farther and farther ahead as I fall always more and more behind, like a peasant missing his train, and the upshot is I feel that I can write only landscape, and in all the rest I am false and false to the marrow of my bones

NINA You work too hard and have no time and no wish to feel your own importance You may be dissatisfied with yourself, of course, but other people think you are great and excellent If I were such a writer as you are I d give my whole life to the people, but I should feel that the only happiness for them would be in rising to me, and they should draw my chariot

TRIGORIN Well, in a chariot Agamemnon am I, or what? (*They are smiling*)

NINA For the happiness of being an author or an actress I would bear any poverty disillusionment I d have people hate me I d live in a garret and eat black bread I d endure my own dissatisfaction with myself and all my faults but in return I should ask for fame real resounding fame (*Covers her face with her hands*) My head s swimming Ouf!

ARKADINA (*From within the house*) Boris Alexeevich!

TRIGORIN She s calling me I dare say, to come and pack But I don t feel like going away (*He glances at the lake*) Look, how beautiful it is! Marvelous!

NINA Do you see over there, that house and garden?

TRIGORIN Yes

NINA It used to belong to my dear mother I was born there I ve spent all my life by this lake and I know every little island on it

TRIGORIN It s all very charming (*Seeing the sea gull*) What is that?

NINA A sea gull Konstantine shot it

TRIGORIN It's a lovely bird Really I don't want to leave here Do try and persuade Irina Nikolaevna to stay (*Makes a note in his book*)

NINA What is it you're writing?

TRIGORIN Only a note An idea struck me (*Putting the notebook away*) An idea for a short story a young girl one like you has lived all her life beside a lake she loves the lake like a sea gull and is happy and free like a sea gull But by chance a man comes sees her and out of nothing better to do destroys her like this sea gull here

(*A pause* MADAME ARKADINA *appears at the window*)

ARKADINA Boris Alexeevich where are you?

TRIGORIN Right away! (*Goes toward the house looking back at* NINA MADAME ARKADINA *remains at the window*) What is it?

ARKADINA We're staying

(TRIGORIN *enters the house*)

NINA (*Coming forward standing lost in thought*) It's a dream!

Curtain

ACT THREE

The dining room in SORIN'S *house On the right and left are doors A sideboard A medicine cupboard In the*

middle of the room a table A small trunk and hatboxes signs of preparations for leaving

TRIGORIN *is at lunch* MASHA *standing by the table*

MASHA I tell you this because youre a writer You might use it I tell you the truth if he had died when he shot himself I wouldnt live another minute Just the same Im getting braver, Ive just made up my mind to tear this love out of my heart by the roots

TRIGORIN How will you do it?

MASHA Im going to get married To Medvedenko

TRIGORIN Is that the schoolmaster?

MASHA Yes

TRIGORIN I dont see why you must do that

MASHA Loving without hope, waiting the whole year long for something but when Im married I wont have any time for love, therell be plenty of new things Ill have to do to make me forget the past Anyhow it will be a change, you know Shall we have another?

TRIGORIN Havent you had about enough?

MASHA Ah! (*Pours two glasses*) Here! Dont look at me like that! Women drink oftener than you imagine Not so many of them drink openly like me Most of them hide it Yes And its always vodka or cognac (*Clinks glasses*) Your health Youre a decent sort, Im sorry to be parting from you

(*They drink*)

TRIGORIN I dont want to leave here myself

MASHA You should beg her to stay

TRIGORIN Shed never do that now Her son is behav

ing himself very tactlessly First he tries shooting him self and now they say he s going to challenge me to a duel But what for? He sulks he snorts he preaches new art forms but there s room for all the new and the old why elbow?

MASHA Well and there s jealousy However that s not my business

(Pause YAKOV *crosses right to left with a piece of luggage* NINA *enters stops near window*)

MASHA That schoolmaster of mine is none too clever but he s a good man and he s poor and he loves me dearly I m sorry for him and I m sorry for his old mother Well let me wish you every happiness Think kindly of me *(Warmly shakes his hand)* Let me thank you for your friendly interest Send me your books be sure to write in them Only don t put es teemed lady but simply this To Maria who not remembering her origin does not know why she is living in this world Good by *(Goes out)*

NINA *(Holding out her hand closed to* TRIGORIN) Even or odd?

TRIGORIN Even

NINA *(Sighing)* No I had only one pea in my hand I was trying my fortune To be an actress or not I wish somebody would advise me

TRIGORIN There s no advice in this sort of thing

(A pause)

NINA We are going to part I may never see you again Won t you take this little medal to remember me? I ve had it engraved with your initials and on the other side the title of your book *Days and Nights*

TRIGORIN What a graceful thing to do! *(Kisses the medal)* It s a charming present

NINA Sometimes think of me

TRIGORIN I ll think of you I ll think of you as I saw you that sunny day do you remember a week ago when you had on your white dress we were talking a white sea gull was lying on the bench beside us

NINA (*Pensive*) Yes, the sea gull (*A pause*) Someone s coming let me see you two minutes before you go won t you? (*Goes out on the left as* MADAME ARKADINA *and* SORIN *in full dress with a decoration enter then* YAKOV, *busy with the packing*)

ARKADINA Stay at home old man How could you be running about with your rheumatism? (*To* TRIGORIN) Who was it just went out? Nina?

TRIGORIN Yes

ARKADINA *Pardon!* We intruded (*Sits down*) I believe everything s packed I m exhausted

TRIGORIN *Days and Nights* page 121, lines eleven and twelve

YAKOV (*Clearing the table*) Shall I pack your fishing rods as well?

TRIGORIN Yes, I ll want them again But the books you can give away

YAKOV Yes, sir

TRIGORIN (*To himself*) Page 121, lines eleven and twelve What s in those lines? (*To* ARKADINA) Have you my works here in the house?

ARKADINA Yes, in my brother s study, the corner book case

TRIGORIN Page 121 (*Exits*)

ARKADINA Really, Petrusha, you d better stay at home.

SORIN You re going away It s dreary for me here at home without you

ARKADINA But whats there in town?

SORIN Nothing in particular but all the same (*Laughs*) Theres the laying of the foundation stone for the town hall and all that sort of thing A man longs if only for an hour or so to get out of this gudgeon existence and its much too long Ive been lying around like an old cigarette holder Ive ordered the horses at one o clock well set off at the same time

ARKADINA (*After a pause*) Oh stay here dont be lone some dont take cold Look after my son Take care of him Advise him (*A pause*) Here I am leaving and so shall never know why Konstantine tried to kill himself I have a notion the main reason was jealousy and the sooner I take Trigorin away from here the better

SORIN How should I explain it to you? There were other reasons besides jealousy Here we have a man who is young intelligent living in the country in soli tude without money without position without a fu ture He has nothing to do He is ashamed and afraid of his idleness I love him very much and hes attached to me, but he feels just the same that hes superfluous in this house and a sort of dependent here a poor relation Thats something we can under stand its pride of course

ARKADINA Im worried about him (*Reflecting*) He might go into the service perhaps

SORIN (*Whistling then hesitatingly*) It seems to me the best thing you could do would be to let him have a little money In the first place he ought to be able to dress himself like other people, and so on Look how hes worn that same old jacket these past three years he runs around without an overcoat (*Laughs*)

Yes, and it wouldn't harm him to have a little fun he might go abroad, perhaps it wouldn t cost much

ARKADINA Perhaps I could manage a suit, but as for *going abroad* no Just at this moment I can t even manage the suit (*Firmly*) I haven t any money! (SORIN *laughs*) I haven t No

SORIN (*Whistling*) Very well Forgive me, my dear, don t be angry You re a generous, noble woman

ARKADINA (*Weeping*) I haven t any money

SORIN Of course if I had any money, I'd give him some myself, but I haven t anything not a kopeck (*Laughs*) My manager takes all my pension and spends it on agriculture, cattle raising, bee keeping and my money goes for nothing The bees die, the cows die, horses they never let me have

ARKADINA Yes, I have some money but I m an actress, my costumes alone are enough to ruin me

SORIN You are very good, my dear I respect you Yes But there again something s coming over me (*Staggers*) My head s swimming (*Leans on table*) I feel faint, and so on

ARKADINA (*Alarmed*) Petrusha! (*Trying to support him*) Petrusha my darling! (*Calls*) Help me! Help! (*Enter* TREPLEFF, *his head bandaged and* MEDVEDENKO)

ARKADINA He feels faint

SORIN It s nothing it s nothing (*Smiles and drinks water*) It s gone already and so on

TREPLEFF (*To his mother*) Don t be alarmed Mother it s not serious It often happens now to my uncle. Uncle, you must lie down a little

SORIN A little, yes All the same I m going to town,

I m lying down a little and I m going to town that s clear (*He goes leaning on his stick*)

MEDVEDENKO (*Gives him his arm*) There s a riddle in the morning it s on four legs at noon on two in the evening on three

SORIN (*Laughs*) That s it And on the back at night Thank you I can manage alone

MEDVEDENKO My what ceremony! (*He and* SORIN *go out*)

ARKADINA How he frightened me!

TREPLEFF It s not good for him to live in the country He s low in his mind Now Mother if you d only have a burst of sudden generosity and lend him a thousand or fifteen hundred he could spend a whole year in town

ARKADINA I haven t any money I m an actress not a banker

(*A pause*)

TREPLEFF Mother change my bandage You do it so well

ARKADINA (*Takes bottle of iodoform and a box of bandages from cupboard*) And the doctor s late

TREPLEFF He promised to be here at ten but it s already noon

ARKADINA Sit down (*Takes off bandage*) You look as if you were in a turban Some man who came by the kitchen yesterday asked what nationality you were But it s almost entirely healed What s left is nothing (*Kisses him on the head*) While I m away you won t do any more click-click?

TREPLEFF No Mother That was a moment when I was out of m head with despair and couldn t control myself It won t happen again (*Kisses her fingers*)

You have clever fingers I remember long long ago when you were still playing at the Imperial Theatre there was a fight one day in our court, and a washerwoman who was one of the tenants got beaten almost to death Do you remember? She was picked up unconscious you nursed her took medicine to her, bathed her children in the wash tub Don t you remember?

ARKADINA No (*Puts on fresh bandage*)

TREPLEFF Two ballet dancers were living then in the same house we did, they used to come and drink coffee with you

ARKADINA That I remember

TREPLEFF They were very pious (*A pause*) Lately, these last days, I have loved you as tenderly and fully as when I was a child Except for you, there's no body left me now Only why, why do you subject yourself to the influence of that man

ARKADINA You don t understand him, You imagine He's a very noble character

TREPLEFF Nevertheless when he was told I was going to challenge him to a duel that really didn't keep him from playing the coward He's leaving Ignominious retreat!

ARKADINA Such tosh! I myself begged him to leave here.

TREPLEFF Noble character! Here we both are nearly quarreling over him, and right now very likely he's in the drawing room or in the garden laughing at us developing Nina, trying once and for all convince her he s a genius

ARKADINA For you it s a pleasure saying disagreeable things to me I respect that man and must ask you not to speak ill of him in my presence

TREPLEFF And I don t respect him You want me too to think he s a genius but forgive me I can t tell lies his creations make me sick

ARKADINA That s envy People who are not talented but pretend to be have nothing better to do than to dis parage real talents It must be a fine consolation!

TREPLEFF (*Sarcastically*) Real talents! (*Angrily*) I m more talented than both of you put together if it comes to that! (*Tears off the bandage*) You two with your stale routine have grabbed first place in art and think that only what you do is real or legitimate the rest you d like to stifle and keep down I don t believe in you two I don t believe in you or in him

ARKADINA Decadent!

TREPLEFF Go back to your darling theatre and act there in trashy stupid plays!

ARKADINA Never did I act in such plays Leave me alone! You are not fit to write even wretched vaude ville Kiev burgher! Sponge!

TREPLEFF Miser!

ARKADINA Beggar! (*He sits down cries softly*) Nonen tity! (*Walks up and down*) Don t cry! You mustn t cry! (*Weeps Kisses him on his forehead his cheeks his head*) My dear child forgive me! Forgive me your wicked mother! Forgive miser ble me!

TREPLEFF (*Embracing her*) If you only knew! I ve lost everything She doesn t love me now I can t write All my hopes are gone

ARKADINA Don t despair It will all pass He s leaving right away She ll love you again (*Dries his tears*) That s enough We ve made it up now

TREPLEFF (*Kissing her hands*) Yes Mother

ARKADINA (*Tenderly*) Make it up with him, too You don t want a duel You don t, do you?

TREPLEFF Very well, only, Mother don t let me see him It s painful to me It s beyond me (TRIGORIN *comes in*) There he is I m going (*Quickly puts dressings away in cupboard*) The doctor will do my bandage later

TRIGORIN (*Looking through a book*) Page 121 lines eleven and twelve Here it is (*Reads*) If you ever ever need my life, come and take it.

(TREPLEFF *picks up the bandage from the floor and goes out*)

ARKADINA (*Looking at her watch*) The horses will be here soon

TRIGORIN (*To himself*) If you ever, ever need my life, come and take it

ARKADINA I hope you are all packed

TRIGORIN (*Impatiently*) Yes yes (*In deep thought*) Why is it I seem to feel sadness in that call from a pure soul and my heart aches so with pity? If you ever, ever need my life come and take it (*To* MADAME ARKADINA) Let s stay just one more day (*She shakes her head*)

TRIGORIN Let s stay!

ARKADINA Darling I know what keeps you here But have some self control You re a little drunk be sober

TRIGORIN You be sober, too be understanding reasonable, I beg you, look at all this like a true friend (*Presses her hard*) You are capable of sacrificing Be my friend let me be free

ARKADINA (*Excited*) Are you so infatuated?

TRIGORIN I am drawn to her! Perhaps this is just what I need

ARKADINA The love of some provincial girl? Oh how little you know yourself!

TRIGORIN Sometimes people talk but are asleep That's how it is now I'm talking to you but in my dream see her I'm possessed by sweet marvelous dreams Let me go

ARKADINA (*Trembling*) No no I'm an ordinary woman like any other woman you shouldn't talk to me like this Don't torture me Boris It frightens me

TRIGORIN If you wanted to you could be far from ordinary There is a kind of love that's young and beautiful and is all poetry and carries us away into a world of dreams on earth it alone can ever give us happiness Such a love I still have never known In my youth there wasn't time I was always around some editor's office fighting off starvation Now it's here that love it's come it beckons me What sense then is there in running away from it?

ARKADINA (*Angry*) You've gone mad

TRIGORIN Well let me!

ARKADINA You've all conspired today just to torment me (*Weeps*)

TRIGORIN (*Clutching at his breast*) She doesn't understand She doesn't want to understand

ARKADINA Am I so old or ugly that you don't mind talking to me about other women? (*Embracing and kissing him*) Oh you madman! My beautiful my marvel you are the last chapter of my life (*Falls on knees*) My joy my pride my blessedness! (*Embracing his knees*) If you forsake me for one hour even I'll never survive it I'll go out of my mind my wonderful magnificent one my master

TRIGORIN Somebody might come in (*Helps her to rise*)

ARKADINA Let them, I am not ashamed of my love for you (*Kisses his hands*) My treasure! You reckless boy, you want to be mad, but I won t have it I won t let you (*Laughs*) You are mine you are mine This brow is mine, and the eyes mine and this beau tiful silky hair, too, is mine You are all mine You are so talented so intelligent, the best of all modern writ ers, you are the one and only hope of Russia you have such sincerity, simplicity, healthy humor In one stroke you go to the very heart of a character or a scene, your people are like life itself Oh, it s impos sible to read you without rapture! Do you think this is only incense? I m flattering you? Come look me in the eyes Do I look like a liar? There you see, only I can appreciate you only I tell you the truth my lovely darling You are coming? Yes? You won't leave me?

TRIGORIN I have no will of my own I ve never had a will of my own Flabby weak, always submitting! Is it possible that might please women? Take me, carry me away, only never let me be one step away from you

ARKADINA (*To herself*) Now he s mine. (*Casually as if nothing had happened*) However, if you like you may stay I ll go by myself and you come later, in a week After all, where would you hurry to?

TRIGORIN No let s go together

ARKADINA As you like Together, together then (*A pause* TRIGORIN *writes in notebook*) What are you writing?

TRIGORIN This morning I heard a happy expression

Virgin forest It might be useful in a story (*Yawns*) So we're off Once more the cars stations station buffets stews and conversations!

(SHAMREYEFF *enters*)

SHAMREYEFF I have the honor with deep regret to announce that the horses are ready It's time most esteemed lady to be off to the station the train arrives at five minutes after two So will you do me the favor Irina Nikolaevna not to forget to inquire about this Where's the actor Suzdaltsev now? Is he alive? Is he well? We used to drink together once upon a time In *The Stolen Mail* he was inimitable In the same company with him at Elisavetgrad I remember was the tragedian Izmailov also a remarkable personality Don't hurry most esteemed lady there are five minutes still Once in some melodrama they were playing conspirators and when they were suddenly discovered he had to say We are caught in a trap but Izmailov said We are traught in a clap" (*Laughs*) Clap!

(YAKOV *is busy with luggage* MAID *brings* ARKADINA'S *hat coat parasol gloves All help her put them on The* COOK *peers th ough door on left as if he itating then he comes in Enter* PAULINE, SORIN *and* MEDVEDENKO)

PAULINE (*With basket*) Here are some plums for the journey They are sweet ones In case you'd like some little thing

ARKADINA You are very kind Pauline Andreevna

PAULINE Good by my dear If anything has been not quite so forgive it (*Cries*)

ARKADINA (*Embracing her*) Everything has been charm

ing, everything's been charming Only you mustn t cry

PAULINE Time goes so

ARKADINA There's nothing we can do about that

SORIN (*In a greatcoat with a cape his hat on and his stick in his hand crossing the stage*) Sister, you d better start if you don t want to be late I ll go get in the carriage (*Exits*)

MEDVEDENKO And I ll walk to the station to see you off I ll step lively

ARKADINA Good by, my friends If we are alive and well next summer we ll meet again (*The* MAID, COOK *and* YAKOV *kiss her hand*) Don t forget me (*Gives* COOK *a rouble*) Here s a rouble for the three of you

COOK We humbly thank you, Madame. Pleasant journey to you Many thanks to you

YAKOV God bless you!

SHAMREYEFF Make us happy with a letter Good by Boris Alexeevich

ARKADINA Where s Konstantine? Tell him I m off now I must say good by to him Well remember me kindly (*To* YAKOV) I gave the cook a rouble It s for the three of you

(*All go out The stage is empty Offstage are heard the usual sounds when people are going away The* MAID *comes back for the basket of plums from the table and goes out again*)

TRIGORIN (*Returning*) I forgot my stick It s out there on the terrace, I think (*As he starts to go out by the door on the left he meets* NINA *coming in*) Is it you We are just going

NINA I felt we should meet again (*Excited*) Boris

MASHA Go yourself

MEDVEDENKO Your father won t let me have a horse.

MASHA He will if you just ask him

MEDVEDENKO Very well I ll try Then you ll come tomorrow

MASHA (*Taking snuff*) Well tomorrow Stop bothering me

(*Enter* TREPLEFF *and* PAULINE TREPLEFF *carries pillows and a blanket* PAULINE *sheets and pillow cases They lay them on the sofa then* TREPLEFF *goes and sits down at his desk*)

MASHA Why s that Mama?

PAULINE Peter Nikolaevich asked to sleep in Kostya s room

MASHA Let me (*She makes the bed*)

PAULINE (*Sighing*) Old people what children (*Goes to the desk Leaning on her elbows she gazes at the manuscript A pause*)

MEDVEDENKO So I m going Good by Masha (*Kisses her hand*) Good by Mother (*Tries to kiss her hand*)

PAULINE (*With annoyance*) Well go if you re going

MEDVEDENKO Good by Konstantine Gavrilovich

(TREPLEFF *without speaking gives him his hand* MEDVEDENKO *goes out*)

PAULINE (*Gazing at the manuscript*) Nobody ever thought or dreamed that some day Kostya you d turn out to be a real author But now thank God the magazines send you money for your stories (*Passing her hand over his hair*) And you ve grown handsome dear good Kostya be kind to my little Masha

MASHA (*Making the bed*) Let him alone Mama

PAULINE She s a sweet little thing (*A pause*) A woman

Kostya, doesn t ask much only kind looks As I well know

(TREPLEFF *rises from the desk and without speaking goes out*)

MASHA You shouldn t have bothered him

PAULINE I feel sorry for you Masha

MASHA Why should you?

PAULINE My heart aches and aches for you I see it all,

MASHA It s all foolishness! Hopeless love that s only in novels No matter Only you mustn t let yourself go and be always waiting for something, waiting for fine weather by the sea If love stirs in your heart, stamp it out Now they've promised to transfer my husband to another district As soon as we get there I ll forget it all I ll tear it out of my heart by the roots

(*Two rooms off is heard a melancholy waltz*)

PAULINE Kostya is playing That means he s feeling sad

MASHA (*Waltzes silently a few turns*) The great thing Mama is to be where I don t see him If only my Semyon could get his transfer, I promise you I d forget in a month It s all nonsense

(*Door on left opens* DORN *and* MEDVEDENKO *come in wheeling* SORIN *in his chair*)

MEDVEDENKO I have six souls at home now And flour at seventy kopecks

DORN So it just goes round and round

MEDVEDENKO It s easy for you to smile You ve got more money than the chickens could pick up

DORN Money! After practicing medicine thirty years, my friend so driven day and night that I could never call my soul my own, I managed to save up at last

two thousand roubles and I ve just spent all that on a trip abroad I ve got nothing at all

MASHA (*To her husband*) Aren t you gone yet?

MEDVEDENKO (*Apologs ing*) How can I when they won t let me have a horse?

MASHA (*Under her breath angrily*) I wish I d never lay eyes on you again

(SORIN S *u heel chair remains left center* PAULINE MASH *and* DORN *sit dou n beside him* MEDVEDENKO *stands to one side gloomily*)

DORN *Look how many changes they have made here!* The drawing room is turned into a study

MASHA Konstantine Gavrilovich likes to work in here He can go into the garden whenever he likes and think

(*A u atchman s rattle sounds*)

SORIN Where s my sister?

DORN She went to the station to meet Trigorin She ll be right back

SORIN If you thought you had to send for my sister that shows I m very ill (*Reflecting*) No v that s odd isn t it? I m very ill but they won t let me have any medicine around here

DORN And what would you like? Valerian drops? Soda? Qu nine?

SORIN So it s more philosophy I suppose Oh vhat an affliction! (*He motions u ith his head tou ard the sofa*) Is that for me?

PAULINE Yes for you Peter Nikolaevich

SORIN Thank you

DORN (*Singing sotto voce*) The moon drifts in the sky tonight

SORIN Listen I want to give Kostya a subject for a

story It should be called The Man Who Wanted To' *L homme qui a voulu* In my youth long ago wanted to become an author and never became one, wanted to speak eloquently and spoke execrably (*Mimicking himself*) and so on and so forth, and all the rest of it, yes and no, and in the resume would drag on, drag on, till the sweat broke out, wanted to marry and never married, wanted always to live in town and now am ending up my life in the country and so on

DORN Wanted to become a State Counselor and became one

SORIN (*Laughing*) For that I never longed That came to me of itself

DORN Come now, to be picking faults with life at sixty two, you must confess, that s not magnanimous

SORIN How bullheaded you are! Can t you take it in? I want to live

DORN That s frivolous it s the law of nature that every life must come to an end

SORIN You argue like a man who s had his fill You ve had your fill and so you re indifferent to living it s all one to you But at that even you will be afraid to die

DORN The fear of death a brute fear We must overcome it The fear of death is reasonable only in those who believe in an eternal life and shudder to think of the sins they have committed But you in the first place don t believe, in the second place what sins have you For twenty five years you served as State Counselor and that s all

SORIN (*Laughing*) Twenty-eight

(TREPLEFF *enters and sits on the stool beside* SORIN MASHA *never takes her eyes off his face*)

DORN We are keeping Konstantine Gavrilovich from his work

TREPLEFF No it s nothing

(*A pause*)

MEDVEDENKO Permit me to ask you Doctor what town in your travels did you most prefer?

DORN Genoa

TREPLEFF Why Genoa?

DORN Because of the marvelous street crowd When you go out of your hotel in the evening you find the whole street surging with people You let yourself drift among the crowd zigzagging back and forth you live its life its soul pours into you until finally you begin to believe there might really be a world spirit after all like that Nina Zaryechny acted in your play By the way where is Nina just now? Where is she and how is she?

TREPLEFF Very ell I imagine

DORN I ve been told she was leading rather an odd sort of life How s that?

TREPLEFF It s a long story Doctor

DORN You can shorten it

(*A pause*)

TREPLEFF She ran away from home and joined Trigorin That you knew?

DORN I know

TREPLEFF She had a child The child died Trigorin got tired of her and ent back to his old ties as might be expected He d never broken these old ties anyhow but flitted in that backboneless style of his from one to the other As far as I could say from what

I know, Nina s private life didn t quite work out.

DORN And on the stage?

TREPLEFF I believe even worse She made her debut in Moscow at a summer theatre, and afterward a tour in the provinces At that time I never let her out of my sight, and wherever she was I was She always at tempted big parts, but her acting was crude, without any taste, her gestures were clumsy There were mo ments when she did some talented screaming talented dying, but those were only moments

DORN It means, though she has talent?

TREPLEFF I could never make out I imagine she has I saw her, but she didn t want to see me, and her maid wouldn t let me in her rooms I understood how she felt, and never insisted on seeing her (*A pause*) What more is there to tell you? Afterward when I d come back home here, she wrote me some letters They were clever tender, interesting, she didn t complain, but I could see she was profoundly unhappy, there was not a word that didn t show her exhausted nerves And she d taken a strange fancy She always signed herself the sea gull In *The Mermaid* the miller says that he s a crow, the same way in all her letters she kept repeating she was a sea gull Now she s here

DORN How do you mean, here?

TREPLEFF In town staying at the inn She s already been here five days living there in rooms Masha drove in but she never sees anybody Semyon Sem yonovich declares that last night after dinner he saw her in the fields a mile and a half from here

MEDVEDENKO Yes I saw her (*A pause*) Going in the opposite direction from here toward town I bowed

to her asked why she had not been out to see us She said she d come

TREPLEFF Well she won t (*A pause*) Her father and stepmother don t want to know her They ve set watchmen to keep her off the grounds (*Goes toward the desk with* DORN) How easy it is Doctor to be a philosopher on paper and how hard it is in life!

SORIN She was a beautiful girl

DORN How s that?

SORIN I say she was a beautiful girl State Counselor Sorin was downright in love with her himself once for a while

DORN You old Lovelace!

(*They hear* SHAMREYEFF s *laugh*)

P ULINE I imagine they re back from the station

TREPLEFF Yes I hear Mother

(*Enter* MADA IE ARKADINA *and* TRIGORIN SHAMREY EFF *following*)

SHA IREYEFF We all get old and fade with the elements esteemed lady but you most honored lady are still young white dress vivacity grace

ARK DINA You still want to bring me bad luck you tiresome creature!

TRIGORIN (*To* SORIN) Howdy do Peter Nikolaevich How is it you are still indisposed? That s not so good (*Pleased at seeing* MASHA) Masha Ilyinishna!

I SH You know me? (*Grasps his hand*)

TRIGORIN Married?

ASHA Long ago

TRIGORIN Are you happy? (*Bows to* DORIN *and* MEDVE DENKO *then hesitatingly goes to* TREPLEFF) Irina Nik olae na tells me you have forgotten the past and given up being angry

(TREPLEFF *holds out his hand*)

ARKADINA (*To her son*) Look, Boris Alexeevich has brought you the magazine with your last story

TREPLEFF (*Taking the magazine To* TRIGORIN) Thank you You're very kind

(*They sit down*)

TRIGORIN Your admirers send their respects to you In Petersburg and in Moscow, everywhere, there's a great deal of interest in your work, and they all ask me about you They ask what is he like, what age is he is he dark or fair? For some reason they all think you are no longer young And nobody knows your real name, since you always publish under a pseudonym You're a mystery, like the Man in the Iron Mask

TREPLEFF Will you be with us long?

TRIGORIN No tomorrow I think I'll go to Moscow I must I'm in a hurry to finish a story, and besides I've promised to write something for an annual In a word it's the same old thing

(MADAME ARKADINA *and* PAULINE *have set up a card table* SHAMRAYEFF *lights candles arranges chairs gets box of lotto from a cupboard*)

TRIGORIN The weather's given me a poor welcome. The wind is ferocious Tomorrow morning if it dies down I'm going out to the lake to fish And I want to look around the garden and the place where   do you remember?   your play was done The idea for a story is all worked out in my mind I want only to refresh my memory of the place where it's laid

MASHA Papa let my husband have a horse! He must get home

SHAMRAYEFF (*Mimics*) A horse   home (*Sternly*) See for yourself they are just back from the station

They ll not go out again

MASHA They re not the only horses (*Seeing that he says nothing she makes an impatient gesture*) Nobody can do anything with you

MEDVEDENKO I can walk Masha Truly

PAULINE (*Sighs*) Walk in such weather! (*Sits down at card table*) Sit down friends

MEDVEDENKO It s only four miles Good by (*Kisses wife s hand*) Good by Mama (*His mother in-law put out her hand reluctantly*) I should not have troubled anybody but the little baby (*Bowing to them*) Good by (*He goes out as if apologizing*)

SHAMREYEFF He ll make it. He s not a general

PAULINE (*Taps on table*) Sit down friends Let s not lose time they ll be calling us to supper soon

(SHAMREYEFF MASHA *and* DORN *sit at the card table*)

ARKADINA (*To* TRIGORIN) When these long autumn evenings draw on we pass the time out here with lotto And look the old lotto set we had when my mother used to play with us children Don t you want to take a hand with us till suppertime? (*She and* TRIGORIN *sit down at the table*) It s a tiresome game but it does well enough when you re used to it (*She deals three cards to each one*)

TREPLEFF (*Turns magazine pages*) He s read his own story but mine he hasn t even cut (*He lays the magazine on the desk on his way out as he passes his mother he kisses her on the head*)

ARKADINA But you Kostya?

TREPLEFF Sorry I don t care to I m going for a walk (*Goes out*)

ARKADINA Stake ten kopecks Put it down for me Doctor

DORN Command me

MASHA Has everybody bet? I'll begin Twenty two

ARKADINA I have it

MASHA Three

DORN Here you are

MASHA Did you put down three? Eight! Eighty-one! Ten!

SHAMREYEFF Not so fast

ARKADINA What a reception they gave me at Kharkoff! Can you believe it, my head's spinning yet

MASHA Thirty four

(*A sad waltz is heard*)

ARKADINA The students gave me an ovation, three baskets of flowers two wreaths and look (*She takes off a brooch and puts it on the table*)

SHAMREYEFF Yes that's the real

MASHA Fifty!

DORN Fifty you say?

ARKADINA I had a superb costume Say what you like, but really when it comes to dressing myself I am no fool

PAULINE Kostya is playing The poor boy's sad

SHAMREYEFF In the papers they often abuse him

MASHA Seventy seven

ARKADINA Who cares what they say?

TRIGORIN He hasn't any luck He still can't discover how to write a style of his own There is something strange vague at times even like delirious raving Not a single character that is alive

MASHA Eleven!

ARKADINA (*Glancing at* SORIN) Petrusha are you bored? (*A pause*) He s asleep

DORN He s asleep the State Counselor

MASHA Seven! Ninety!

TRIGORIN Do you think if I lived in such a place as this and by this lake I would write? I should over come such a passion and devote my life to fishing

MASHA Twenty eight!

TRIGORIN To catch a perch or a bass that s some thing like happiness!

DORN Well I believe in Konstantine Gavrilovich He has something! He has somethin ! He thinks in images his stories re bright and full of color I always feel them strongly It s only a pity that he s got no d finite purpose He creates impressions ne er more than that but on mere impressions you don t go far Irina Nikolaevna are you glad your son is a writer?

ARK DIN Imagine I have not read him yet There s never time

MASHA T enty six!

(TREPLEFF *enters without saying anything sits at his desk*)

SHA SREYEFF And Boris Alexee icl we ve still got something of yours here

TRIGORIN What s that?

SHA IREYEFF Somehow or other Konstantine Gavrilovich shot a sea gull and you asked me to have it stuffed for you

TRIGORIN I don t remember (*Peflecting*) I don t re memb r

MASHA Sixty six! One!

TREPLEFF (*Throwing open the window stands listen*

ing) How dark! I dont know why I feel so uneasy

ARKADINA Kostya, shut the window, theres a draught (TREPLEFF *shuts window*)

MASHA Ninety-eight

TRIGORIN I ve made a game

ARKADINA (*Gaily*) Bravo! Bravo!

SHAMREYEFF Bravo!

ARKADINA This mans lucky in everything, always (*Rises*) And now lets go have a bite of something Our celebrated author didnt have any dinner today After supper well go on Kostya leave your manuscript come have something to eat

TREPLEFF I dont want to, Mother I ve had enough

ARKADINA As you please (*Wakes* SORIN) Petrusha supper! (*Takes* SHAMREYEFF s *arm*) I ll tell you how they received me in Kharkoff

(PAULINE *blows out candles on table She and* DORN *wheel* SORIN s *chair out of the room All but* TREPLEFF *go out He gets ready to write Runs his eye over what s already written*)

TREPLEFF I ve talked so much about new forms but now I feel that little by little I am slipping into mere routine myself (*Reads*) The placards on the wall proclaimed pale face in a frame of dark hair frame thats flat (*Scratches out what he s written*) I ll begin again where the hero is awakened by the rain and throw out all the rest This description of a moonlight night is too long and too precious Trigorin has worked out his own method its easy for him With him a broken bottleneck lying on the dam glitters in the moonlight and the mill wheel casts a black shadow and there before you is the

moonlight night but with *me* it s the shimmering light and the *silent* twinkling of the stars and *the* faroff sound of a piano dying away in the still sweet scented air It s painful (*A pause*) Yes I m coming more and more to the conclusion that it s a matter not of old forms and not *of* new forms but that a man writes not thinking at all of what form to choose writes because it comes pouring out from his soul (*A tap at the window nearest the desk*) What s that? (*Looks out*) I don t see anything (*Opens the door and peers into the garden*) Someone ran down the steps (*Calls*) Who s there? (*Goes out The sound of his steps along the veranda A moment later returns with* NINA) Nina! Nina! (*She lays her head on his breast with restrained sobbing*)

TREPLEFF (*Moved*) Nina! Nina! *It s* you you I had a presentiment all day my soul was tormented (*Takes off her hat and cape*) Oh my sweet my darling she has come! Let s not cry let s not

NINA There s someone here

TREPLEFF No one

NINA Lock the doors Someone might come *in*

TREPLEFF Nobody s coming in

NINA I know Irina Nikolaevna is here Lock the doors

TREPLEFF (*Locks door on right Goes to door on left*) This one doesn t lock I ll put a chair against it (*Puts chair against door*) Don t be afraid nobody s coming in

NINA (*As if studying his face*) Let me look at you (*Glancing around her*) It s warm cozy This used to be the drawing room Am I very much changed?

TREPLEFF Yes you are thinner and your eyes are

bigger Nina, how strange it is I m seeing you Why wouldn t you let me come to see you? Why didn t you come sooner? I know you ve been here now for nearly a week I have been every day there where you were, I stood under your window like a beggar

NINA I was afraid you might hate me I dream every night that you look at me and don t recognize me If you only knew! Ever since I came I ve been here walking about by the lake I ve been near your house often and couldn t make up my mind to come in Let s sit down (*They sit*) Let s sit down and let's talk, talk It s pleasant here, warm, cozy You hear the wind? There s a place in Tur genev Happy is he who on such a night is under his own roof, who has a warm corner I a sea gull no, that s not it (*Rubs her forehead*) What was I saying? Yes Turgenev And may the Lord help all homeless wanderers It s nothing (*Sobs*)

TREPLEFF Nina, again Nina!

NINA It's nothing It will make me feel better I ve not cried for two years Last night I came to the garden to see whether our theatre was still there and it s there still I cried for the first time in two years and my heart grew lighter and my soul was clearer Look I m not crying now (*Takes his hand*) You are an author, I an actress We have both been drawn into the whirlpool I used to be as happy as a child I used to wake up in the morning singing I loved you and dreamed of being famous, and now? Tomor row early I must go to Yelets in the third class with peasants, and at Yelets the cultured merchants will plague me with attentions Life s brutal!

TREPLEFF Why Yelets?

NINA I ve taken an engagement there for the winter It s time I was going

TREPLEFF Nina I cursed you and hated you I tore up all your letters tore up your photograph and yet I knew every minute that my heart was bound to yours forever It s not in my power to stop loving you Nina Ever s nce I lost you and began to get my work published my life has been unbearable I m miserable All of a sudden my youth was snatched from me and now I feel as if I d been livin in the world for ninety years I call out to you I kiss the ground you valk on I see your face wher ever I look the tender smile that shone on me those best years of my life

NINA *(In despair)* Why does he talk like that? Why does he talk like that?

TREPLEFF I m alone not armed ly anybod s affec tion I m all chilled *it s cold* l ke living in a cave A d no matter vhat I r te it s lry gl omy and harsh Stay here Nina if you only vould! And if *you won t then take me ith you*

(NINA *quickly puts on her hat and cape*)

TREPLEFF Nina hy? For God s sake Nina *(He is look ng at her as she puts her things on A pau e)*

NINA My horses are just out there Don t see me off I ll manage by myself *(Sobbing)* Gi e me some water

(He gi es her a glass of water)

TREPLEFF Where are you g ing no v?

NINA *To to vn (A pause)* Is Irina Nikolaevna here?

TREPLEFF Yes Thurs lay my uncle was not well we telegraphed her to come

NINA Why do you say you kiss the ground I walk on? I ought to be killed (*Bends over desk*) I m so tired If I could rest rest I m a sea gull No, that s not it I m an actress Well, no matter (*Hears* ARKADINA *and* TRIGORIN *laughing in the dining room She listens runs to the door on the left and peeps through the keyhole*) And he s here too (*Goes to* TREPLEFF) Well, no matter He didn t believe in the theatre, all my dreams he d laugh at and little by little I quit believing in it myself, and lost heart And there was the strain of love, jealousy constant anxiety about my little baby I got to be small and trashy, and played without thinking I didn t know what to do with my hands, couldn t stand properly on the stage, couldn t control my voice You can t imagine the feeling when you are acting and know it s dull I m a sea gull No, that s not it Do you remember, you shot a sea gull? A man comes by chance sees it, and out of nothing else to do destroys it That s not it (*Puts her hand to her forehead*) What was I I was talking about the stage Now I m not like that I m a real actress, I act with delight, with rapture, I m drunk when I m on the stage and feel that I am beautiful And now, ever since I ve been here, I ve kept walking about kept walking and thinking thinking and believing my soul grows stronger every day Now I know I understand Kostya, that in our work acting or writing what matters is not fame not glory not what I used to dream about, it s how to endure, to bear my cross and have faith I have faith and it all doesn t hurt me so much and when I think of my calling I m not afraid of life.

TREPLEFF (*Sadly*) You ve found your way you know where you are going but I still move in a chaos of images and dreams not knowing why or who it s for I have no faith and I don t know where my calling lies

NINA (*Listening*) Ssh I m going Good by When I m a great actress come and look at me You promise? But now (*Takes his hand*) It s late. I can hardly stand on my feet I feel faint I d like something to eat.

TREPLEFF Stay I ll bring you some supper here

NINA No no I can manage by myself The horses are just out there So she brought him along with her? But that s all one When you see Trigorin don t ever tell him anything I love him I love him even more than before An idea for a short story"— I love I love passionately I love to desperation How nice it used to be Kostya! You remember? How gay and warm and pure our life was what things we felt tender delicate like flowers Do you remember? (*Recites*) Men and beasts lions eagles and partridges antlered deer mute fishes dwelling in the water starfish and small creatures invisible to the eye these and all life have run their sad course and are no more Thousands of creatures have come and gone since there was life on the earth Vainly now the pallid moon doth light her lamp In the meadows the cranes wake and cry no longer and the beetles hum is silent in the linden groves (*Impulsively embraces* TREPLEFF *and runs out by the terrace door A pause*)

TREPLEFF Too bad if any one meets her in the garden and tells Mother That might upset Mother (*He

stands for two minutes tearing up all his manuscripts and throwing them under the desk then unlocks door on right and goes out)

DORN (*Trying to open the door on the left*) That s funny This door seems to be locked (*Enters and puts chair back in its place*) A regular hurdle race

(*Enter* MADAME ARKADINA *and* PAULINE *behind them* YAKOV *with a tray and bottles* MASHA, *then* SHAMREYEFF *and* TRIGORIN)

ARKADINA Put the claret and the beer for Boris Alexeevich here on the table We ll play and drink Let's sit down, friends

PAULINE (*To* YAKOV) Bring the tea now, too (*Light the candles and sits down*)

SHAMREYEFF (*Leading* TRIGORIN *to the cupboard*) Here s the thing I was telling you about just now By your order

TRIGORIN (*Looking at the sea gull*) I don t remember (*Reflecting*) I don t remember

(*Sound of a shot offstage right Everybody jumps*)

ARKADINA (*Alarmed*) What s that?

DORN Nothing It must be in my medicine case something blew up Don t you worry (*He goes out right in a moment returns*) So it was A bottle of ether blew up (*Sings*) Again I stand before thee! Enchanted

ARKADINA (*Sitting down at the table*) Phew I was frightened! It reminded me of how (*Puts her hands over her face*) Everything s black before my eyes

DORN (*Turning through the magazine to* TRIGORIN) About two months ago in this magazine there was

an article a letter from America and I wanted to ask you among other things (*Puts his arm around* TRIGORIN S *waist and leads him toward the front of the stage*) since I m very much interested in this question (*Dropping his voice*) Get Irina Nikolaevna somewhere away from here. The fact is Konstantine Gavrilovich has shot himself

Curtain

Uncle Vanya

CHARACTERS

SEREBRIAKOFF ALEXANDER VLADIMIROVICH *a retired professor*

ELENA ANDREEVNA *his wife twenty seven years old*

SOFIA ALEXANDROVNA (SONIA) *his daughter by a first marriage*

VOINITSKAYA MARIA VASILIEVNA *widow of a privy councillor mother of the first wife of the professor*

VOINITSKY IVAN PETROVICH *her son* (UNCLE VANYA)

ASTROFF MIKHAIL LVOVICH *a doctor*

TELEGIN ILYA ILYICH *an impoverished landowner*

MARINA *an old nurse*

A WORKMAN

The action takes place on the estate of Serebriakoff

ACT ONE

A garden A part of the house and its terrace can be seen Under an old poplar in the alley a table is set for tea There are benches and chairs a guitar lies on one of the benches Not far from the table there is a swing It is past two in the afternoon of a cloudy day

MARINA, *a plain small old woman sits near the samovar without moving and knits on a stocking* ASTROFF *walks to and fro near her*

MARINA (*Pouring a glass*) Drink some tea, son, please

ASTROFF (*Accepts the glass unwillingly*) Somehow I don't feel like it

MARINA Maybe you ll drink a little vodka?

ASTROFF No I don t drink vodka every day Besides it i very sultry today (*A pause*) Nurse, how long have we known each other?

MARINA (*Thinking it over*) How long? May God help me to remember You came here to these parts When? Vera Petrovna was still alive, little Sonia s mother In her time you were here for two winters so it comes to about eleven years in all (*Pausing to think*) And maybe even more.

ASTROFF Have I changed much since then?

MARINA Much Then you were young and h

and now you have aged And your good looks now are not what they were And what s more might we say you drink a little vodka

ASTROFF Yes In ten years I have become a different man And what is the reason? I am overworked nurse From morning till night always on your feet don t kno v what rest is and at night you lie under a blanket and are afraid you might be dragged off to see some sick man During all the time we have known each other I have not had one free day How can anybody not grow old? And life itself is boring stupid dirty it strangles you this life Around you only odd people without exception odd people and having lived with them two or three years little by little you get to be odd yourself It s unavoidable fate (*Twirling his long mustache*) Look how I ve gro vn this enormous mustache it s a silly mustache I ve grown odd Nurse I haven t grown stupider my brains thank God are in the right place but my feelings somehow have grov n numb There s nothing I vant nothing I need nobody I love Maybe it s only you that I love (*Kissing her head*) When I was little I had a nurse like you

MARINA Maybe you d like something to eat

ASTROFF No The third week of Lent I went to Maltskoye to an epidemic typhus The huts were stacked full of people Filth stench smoke, calves running around the floor among the sick and pigs too I was hard at it all day never sat do n didn t ha e a bite to eat and when I came home they vouldn t let me rest—they brought in a railroad sv itchman I put him on the table to perform an operation and he ups and dies on me under the chloro-

form And just when I didn't need any feelings, my feelings woke up, my conscience was stricken, as if I had killed him deliberately I sat down closed my eyes—like this—and I thought those who will live one or two hundred years after us, and those we blaze the trail for now, will they remember us with a kind word? But they won t, Nurse

MARINA People won t remember but God will remem ber

ASTROFF Thank you very much That was well said

(VOINITSKY *comes out of the house he has had a nap after lunch and looks rumpled He sits down on the bench as he arranges his stylish necktie*)

VOINITSKY Yes (*A pause*) Yes

ASTROFF Had enough sleep?

VOINITSKY Yes Very much so (*Yawns*) Since the Professor and his spouse came to live here, life is off the track I sleep at odd hours for lunch and din ner I eat a lot of highly spiced dishes drink wine all that is not good for your health We never used to have a free minute, Sonia and I worked—I can tell you that—and now it s only Sonia who works, and I sleep, eat, drink There s no good in it

MARINA (*Shaking her head*) No order to anything around here The Professor gets up at twelve o clock, but the samovar has been boiling since early morning, waiting for him Without them here we used to have dinner right after noon as people do everywhere, and with them here it is nearly seven At night the Profes sor reads and writes and suddenly when it s after one at night there s a ring What is it, sir? Tea? Wake up people for him, start the samovar (*Scornfully*) What orde !

ASTROFF And will they stay here long?

VOINITSKY *A hundred years The Professor has decided to settle down here*

MARINA There now You see The samovar has already been two hours on the table and they are gone walking

VOINITSKY Here they are here they are Don t get upset

(Voices are hea d from the depths of the garden returning f om a walk come SEREBRIAKOFF ELENA ANDREEVNA SONIA *and* TELEGIN)

SEREBRIAKOFF Wonderful wonderful Wonderful views!

TELEGIN Remarkable your Excellency

SONIA We ll go into the woods tomorrow Papa Would you like to?

VOINITSKY Ladies and *gentlemer tea!*

SEREBRIAKOFF Send my tea into my study be so kind my friends I have something more that I must do today

SONIA And you vill surely like the woods

(ELENA ANDREEVNA SEREBRIAKOFF *and* SONIA *go into the hot se* TELEGIN *goes to the table and sits do n near* MARINA)

VOINITSKY It s hot stifling really but our great scientist has an overcoat on rubbers an umbrella and gloves

ASTROFF That means he is preserving his health

VOINITSKY But how beautiful she is! How beau iful! In all my life I have never seen a lovelier woman

TELEGIN *(His speech is high pitched and pretentious)* Whether I ride in the field Marina Timofeevna walk in the shady garden or look at this table I experience inexplicable delight! The weather is charming the lit

tle birds sing, we all live in thi ... what more could we have! (*Accep*... I am deeply grateful to you!

VOINITSKY (*Dreamily*) What eye... woman!

ASTROFF Talk about something, Ivan Pe...

VOINITSKY (*Listlessly*) What shall I tal...

ASTROFF Isn t there anything new?

VOINITSKY Nothing Everything is ... the same as I always was grow... since I m getting lazy, I do nothi... fuss like any old grumbler My ... is still babbling about the eman... with one eye she looks into the ... other she rummages through her ... the dawn of a new life

ASTROFF And the Professor?

VOINITSKY And the Professor is ... ing till late at night in his study ... poet says Straining our brain ... keep writing writing odes but ... hear any praise anywhere Poor ... better if he wrote his autobiograph... subject that would be! A retired ... derstand an old crust a learned ... Gout rheumatism, migraine and ... with jealousy and envy So ... on the estate of his first wife live... will because he cannot afford to liv... complains of his misfortunes thou... fact he is unusually lucky (*Ne*... think what luck! He was the son of ... tan, he was a simple theological stu...

to a university degree and a professor s chair became his Excellency the son in law of a Senator *et cetera et cetera* All that is unimportant however this is the point a man for exactly twenty five years reads and writes about art and understands exactly nothing *about art* *Twenty five years he chews over some* other man s thoughts about realism naturalism and all the other nonsense twenty five years reads and writes about what intelligent people already know and stupid people are not interested in—which means that for twenty five years he pours from empty to empty And along with it what conceit! What pretense! He retired and he is not known to a single living soul he is absolutely unknown which just means that for those twenty five years he was occupying somebody else s place But mind you he strides about like a demigod!

ASTROFF Well it seems you are envious

VOINITSKY Yes I am envious! Look at his success with women! No Don Juan ever knew such complete success as he s had His first wife my sister—she was a beautiful gentle creature pure as this blue sky noble generous who had more admirers than he had students—she loved him as only pure angels might love *those who are as pure and beautiful as they are* His mother in law my mother still adores him and he still inspires her with holy awe His second wife a beauty clever—you just saw her—married him when he was already old gave him her youth beauty freedom brilliance For what? Why?

ASTROFF Is she faithful to the professor?

VOINITSKY Unfortunately yes

ASTROFF And why unfortunately?

VOINITSKY Faithfulness like this is false from beginning to end, it has a fine sound but no logic To be unfaithful to an old husband you cannot bear—is immoral, but to try to silence within yourself your poor youth and your live feelings—that is quite moral

TELEGIN (*In a tearful voice*) Vanya, I don't like it when you say that Really, now anybody who is unfaithful to wife or to husband, is it means so to me, an unfaithful person who can even be unfaithful to his country!

VOINITSKY (*Annoyed*) Oh, turn off your tap Waffles!

TELEGIN Allow me, Vanya—my wife ran off with her lover the day after our wedding (*Pompously*) because of my unattractive appearance After that I have not shirked my duty I still up till now love her and am faithful to her, help her with what I can and gave up my property to educate the little children she begot with her lover Happiness I am robbed of but I still have pride And she? Her youth is gone her beauty under the influence of the laws of nature is faded her lover has passed away What has she left

(*Enter* SONIA *and* ELENA ANDREEVNA *a little later enter* MARIA VASILIEVNA *with a book she sits down and reads she is served tea and she drinks it without looking up*)

SONIA (*Rapidly to nurse*) There Nurse, the peasants have come Go talk to them and I'll pour the tea (*Pours tea*) (*The nurse leaves* ELENA *takes her cup and drinks sitting in the swing*)

ASTROFF (*To* ELENA) I really came to see your husband You wrote that he is very sick rheumatism and something else but apparently he is quite well

ELENA Yesterday evening he was down in the dumps

complained of pains in his legs and today he is quite fit

ASTROFF And with me breaking my neck galloping thirty versts Well it s all right and it s not the first time Just for that I ll stay with you till tomorrow and at least will sleep *quantum satis*

SONIA Wonderful! You so very seldom spend the night with us Very likely you haven t had any dinner?

ASTROFF No I have not

SONIA So then you shall have dinner as well We now dine after six o clock (*Drinking*) The tea s cold!

TELEGIN In the samovar the temperature has already lowered considerably

ELENA Very well Ivan Ivanovich we will drink it cold

TELEGIN Excuse me Not Ivan Ivanovich but Ilya Ilyich Ilya Ilyich Telegin or as some people call me with my pock marked face Waffles Once upon a time it was I who christened Sonia and his Excellency your spouse knows me very well I live with you now on this estate If you have deigned to notice I have dinner with you every day

SONIA Ilya Ilyich is our helper our right hand (*Tenderly*) Let me pour you some more Godfather

MARIA VOINITSKAYA Oh!

SONIA What is it Grandmother?

MARIA VOINITSKAYA I forgot to tell Alexander I forgot something I received a letter today from Kharkoff from Pavel Alexeevich He sent his new pamphlet

ASTROFF Is it interesting?

MARIA VOINITSKAYA Interesting but it s strange somehow He disapproves of what seven years ago he himself defended It s terrible!

VOINITSKY There is nothing terrible in that Drink, Mama, drink your tea

MARIA VOINITSKAYA But I want to talk!

VOINITSKY But for fifty years now we talk and talk and read pamphlets It s high time to stop

MARIA VOINITSKAYA You seem to find it hard to listen when I talk Forgive me, Jean, but during the last year you have changed so that I absolutely do not recognize you You used to be a man of strong convictions, a bright personality

VOINITSKY Oh, yes! I used to be a bright personality that didn t give light to anybody (*A pause*) I used to be a bright personality! That couldn t be more venomous! I am forty seven years old Up to last year, I deliberately tried just as you do to blind my eyes with this pedantry of yours and not to see real life—and I thought I was doing well And now, if you only knew! I don t sleep nights because of disappointment, and anger that I so stupidly let time slip by, when now I could have had everything that my old age denies me!

SONIA Uncle Vanya, that s boring

MARIA VOINITSKAYA (*To her son*) It looks as if you are challenging your former convictions But they are not guilty it s you are guilty You keep forgetting that a conviction in itself is nothing it s a dead letter You should have been doing something

VOINITSKY Doing something? Not everybody is capable of being a *perpetuum mobile* writing like your *Herr* professor

MARIA VOINITSKAYA What do you mean by that?

SONIA (*Imploringly*) Grandmother! Uncle Vanya! I beg you!

VOINITSKY I am silent Silent and apologizing (*A pause*)

ELENA And fine weather today Not hot (*A pause*)

VOINITSKY It s fine weather to hang yourself

(TELEGIN *tunes the guitar* MARINA *walks near the house and calls the chickens*)

MARINA Here Chick Chick Chick

SONIA Nurse why have the peasants come?

MARINA Still the same old thing still about the waste plot of land Here Chick Chick Chick

SONIA Which one are you calling?

MARINA Spotty! She s gone off with her chicks The crows might get them (*Goes out*)

(TELEGIN *plays a polka everyone listens silently* A WORKMAN *enters*)

WORKMAN Master Doctor here? (*To* ASTROFF) Please Mikhail Lvovich we came to get you

ASTROFF From where?

WORKMAN From the factory

ASTROFF (*Annoyed*) I thank you humbly Then I must go (*Looks around for his cap*) Bother the devil take it Where is that cap?

SONIA How tiresome it is really to come from the factory to dinner!

ASTROFF No It will be too late Where Where to (*To the* WORKMAN) Here s what sl p me a glass of vodka my good fellow anyhow (WORKMAN *goes out*) Where where to (*Finds his cap*) Ostroffsky in some play of his has a m n with a l g mustache and small abilities That s me Well I have the honor to bid you good by ladies and gentlemen (*To* ELENA) If you would look in on me some

time, you and Sonia here, I'd be very glad—truly I have a tiny little estate, in all about thirty acres but, if it interests you a model garden and nursery, such as you won t find around here in a thousand miles Next to me is the state forestry The forester there is old, always sick and the truth is I handle all the work that s done

ELENA They have told me that you love the woods very much Of course, one can be very useful but doesn't it interfere with your real calling? After all you are a doctor

ASTROFF God only knows what is our real calling

ELENA And is it interesting?

ASTROFF Yes, it s an interesting business

VOINITSKY (Ironically) Very!

ELENA (*To* ASTROFF) You are still a young man, you look well thirty six or seven years old and it must not be quite so interesting, as you say, with always the trees and the trees and the trees I think it s monotonous

SONIA No, it is extremely interesting Every year Mikhail Lvovich plants new wood plots and they have already sent him a bronze medal and a diploma He petitioned not to have the old ones destroyed If you would only hear him out you would agree with him completely He says that forests adorn the earth that they teach a man to understand the beautiful and inspire him to lofty moods Forests soften a severe climate In countries where the climate is mild you spend less effort in the struggle with nature and so man there is gentler and tenderer people are beautiful there lively easily excited their speech is exquisite, their movements are graceful Their sciences and

arts blossom their philosophy is not gloomy their relation to a woman is full of exquisite nobility

VOINITSKY (*Laughing*) Bravo bravo! All this is darling but not convincing and so (*To* ASTROFF) allow me my friend to go on heating stoves with wood and building barns out of wood

ASTROFF You can heat stoves with peat moss and build barns with stones Well I admit you may cut woods out of some need but why destroy them? Russian woods are creaking under the ax milliards of trees perish dwellings of beasts and birds are emptied rivers go shallow and dry wonderful landscapes vanish never to be brought back again and all because lazy man hasn t sense enough to bend down and pick up fuel from the ground (*To* ELENA) Isn t that the truth my lady? He must be a reckless barbarian to burn this beauty in his stove destroy what we cannot create again Man is endowed with intellect and creative powers so that he may multiply what is given to him but up to now he has not created he has destroyed Forests are fewer and fewer rivers dry up game becomes extinct the climate is ruined and every day the earth gets poorer and uglier (*To* VOINITSKY) Here you are with that mocking look in your eyes and all I say seems to you not very serious and and indeed it may be foolishness but when I pass the peasants woods that I have saved from being chopped down or when I hear the sound of my young wood rustling the stand I planted with my own hands I realize the climate too is a little in my power and that a thousand years from now if man should be happy why then I ll be a small part of that too When I plant a birch and see it later on burst into green and wave

in the wind, my soul fills with pride, and I (*Seeing the* WORKMAN, *who has brought a tray with a glass of vodka*) However (*Drinks*) it s time The whole thing very likely is only foolishness after all I have the honor to bid you good by (*Going toward the house*)

SONIA (*Taking his arm and going along with him*) When will you come to see us?

ASTROFF I don t know

SONIA Again after a month?

(ASTROFF *and* SONIA *go into the house* MARIA VASILIEVNA *and* TELEGIN *remain near the table* ELENA *and* VOINITSKY *go toward the terrace*)

ELENA And you, Ivan Petrovich you behaved yourself impossibly again Did you have to annoy Maria Vasilievna, talking of *perpetuum mobile!* And today at lunch you argued with Alexander again How small of you that is!

VOINITSKY But what if I detest him!

ELENA There is nothing to detest Alexander for he is the same as you all are Not any worse than you are

VOINITSKY If you could see your face your movements How lazy your life is! Oh how lazy!

ELENA Oh both lazy and bored! Everybody blames my husband, everybody looks at me with pity miserable creature she has an old husband! This concern over me—oh, how I understand it! Just as Astroff said you all go on ruining our woods recklessly and soon there will be nothing left on earth In the same way you ruin man recklessly and soon thanks to you soon there will be no faithfulness no purity no capacity for sacrifice left on earth Why can t you look at a woman with indifference if she is not yours? Be-

cause—the doctor was right—in all of you sits the demon of destruction You have no pity either for woods or birds or women or for each other

VOINITSKY I don t like this philosophy

(*A pause*)

ELENA This doctor has a tired nervous face An interesting face It s obvious Sonia likes him she is in love with him and I understand her While I have been here he has been here three times already but I am shy and have not really talked to him once even and haven t b en kind to him He thought I had a grudge against him It s quite possible that the reason you and I are such friends Ivan is that both of us are tiresome boring people! Tiresome! Don t look at me that way I don t like it

VOINITSKY How can I look at you differently if I love you? You are my joy my life my youth! I know my chance of any return is just about nil but I don t want anything just let me look a you hear your voi e

ELENA H ish they might hear you!

(*They go toward the house*)

VOINITSKY (*Following her*) Don t drive me away let me talk about my love and just that will be the greatest happiness for me

ELENA This is painful (*Both enter the house*)

(TELEGIN *strums some chords and plays a polka* MARIA VASILIEVNA *is jotting something down on the margins of the pamphlet*)

Curtain

ACT TWO

Dining room in SEREBRIAKOFF'S *house It is night you can hear the watchman tapping in the garden* SEREBRIAKOFF *is sitting in an easy chair in front of an open window dozing* ELENA ANDREEVNA *sits near him and is also dozing*

SEREBRIAKOFF (*Awaking suddenly*) Who is there? Sonia you?

ELENA This is me

SEREBRIAKOFF You Lenotchka This unbearable pain!

ELENA Your robe has fallen on the floor (*Bundles up his legs*) I'll shut the window Alexander

SEREBRIAKOFF No not for me to me it's stuffy I just now dozed off and dreamed that my left leg did not belong to me An excruciating pain woke me up No this is not the gout it's rheumatism more likely What time is it now?

ELENA Twenty minutes past midnight (*A pause*)

SEREBRIAKOFF In the morning look in the library for Batyushkov It seems to me we have him

ELENA What?

SEREBRIAKOFF Look for Batyushkov in the morning I seem to remember we had him But why is it so hard for me to breathe

ELENA You are tired Not sleeping a second night

SEREBRIAKOFF They say that Turgenev developed angina from gout I am afraid it might be that way with me This damned disgusting old age the devil take it! When I got old I began to be revolting to myself And you all I dare say find it revolting to look at me

ELENA You speak of your old age as if we were all guilty of your being old

SEREBRIAKOFF And you are the first one to be revolted (ELENA *moves away and sits down farther away from him*) Of course you are right I am not stupid and I understand You are young healthy beautiful you want to live and I am an old man almost a corpse So? As if I didn t understand? And of course it s stupid of me to be still alive But wait a little soon I ll set you all free It won t be much longer now that I shall have to drag myself around

ELENA I can t bear it For God s sake be quiet

SEREBRIAKOFF It looks as if nobody can bear it thanks to me everyone is bored everyone is ruining their youth I am the only one I m the only one who s enjoying life and is content Yes of course!

ELENA (*In tears*) Be quiet! You have me all worn out

SEREBRIAKOFF I am torturing everybody Of course

ELENA (*Through her tears*) It s unbearable! Tell me what do you want from me?

SEREBRIAKOFF Nothing

ELENA Well then be quiet I beg you

SEREBRIAKOFF It s a strange thing Ivan Petrovich begins to talk or that old idiot Maria Vasilievna—and it s quite all right with everybody listening but if I say *just one word look how everybody begins to be*

miserable Even my voice is revolting Well, let us suppose I am revolting, I am an egoist I am a despot —but don t I really, even in my old age, have some right to egotism? As if I have not earned it? As if is what I m asking you I have no right to a quiet old age to some attention from people?

ELENA Nobody is disputing your rights (*A window is banging in the wind*) A wind has come up I ll close the window (*Closing it*) It will rain soon Nobody is disputing your rights

(*A pause the watchman in the garden is tapping and singing a song*)

SEREBRIAKOFF To work all your life for learning grow used to your desk to your auditorium to your es teemed colleagues—and suddenly for no reason, to find yourself in this morgue to see here every day stupid people to listen to flat conversations I want to live, I love success I love fame applause—and then here—here I am like an exile To grieve over your past every minute to watch the success of the others to fear death I can t! I haven t the strength for it! And here they are, they won t even fo give me for being old

ELENA Wait do have patience in five or six years I ll be old too

(*Enter* SONIA)

SONIA Papa, you yourself gave orders to fetch Doctor Astroff and when he got here you refused to see him That is not very nice We have just bothered a man for nothing

SEREBRIAKOFF What do I need your Astroff for He understands just about as much of medicine as I un derstand of astronomy

SONIA We can't with your gout summon the entire medical faculty

SEREBRIAKOFF I wouldn't even talk to that imbecile

SONIA As you like (*Sitting down*) It's all the same to me

SEREBRIAKOFF What time is it now?

ELENA Past midnight

SEREBRIAKOFF I'm suffocating—Sonia fetch me the drops from the table!

SONIA Certainly at once (*She hands him the drops*)

SEREBRIAKOFF (*With annoyance*) Ach not those! You can't even ask—you can't even ask for anything!

SONIA I beg you don't be capricious It might please some people but not me kindly leave me out of it I don't like it Besides I have no time to waste I have to get up early tomorrow I've got hay to cut (*Enter* VOINITSKY *in a dressing gown with a candle*)

VOINITSKY A storm is gathering outside (*Lightning*) There now! Elena and Sonia go to sleep I have come to take your place

SEREBRIAKOFF (*Alarmed*) No no! Don't leave me with him! No He'll talk my head off

VOINITSKY But we must give them some rest! It is the second night now they have not had any sleep

SEREBRIAKOFF Let them go to sleep but you go away too Thank you I implore you For the sake of our former friendship don't protest We'll talk later

VOINITSKY (*Smiling ironically*) Our former friendship former !

SONIA Be quiet Uncle Vanya

SEREBRIAKOFF (*To his wife*) My dear don't leave me with him! He'll talk my head off

VOINITSKY Really this is just getting to be laughable

(*Enter* MARINA *with a candle*)

SONIA You ought to lie down, Nurse It's already late

MARINA The samovar hasn't been cleared from the table yet How can you very well lie down?

SEREBRIAKOFF Everybody doesn't sleep everybody can't bear it, only I, I alone am blissfully happy

MARINA (*Comes to* SEREBRIAKOFF *tenderly*) What is it, dear sir? Does it hurt? My legs throb too, how they throb! (*Arranging the robe*) This is your old ailment Vera Petrovna, Sonia's dear mother, used to spend sleepless nights killing herself pitying you She loved you so (*A pause*) Old ones like young ones want somebody to feel sorry for them but nobody feels sorry for the old (*Kisses* SEREBRIAKOFF *on his shoulder*) Dear sir, let's go to bed Let's go, my dear I will give you some linden tea to drink it will warm up your feet I'll pray to God for you

SEREBRIAKOFF (*Very much touched*) Let us go, Marina

MARINA My legs throb so throb so! (*She and* SONIA *are leading him*) Your Vera Petrovna Sonia's mother, was always killing herself with pity always crying You were still small and foolish Sonia then Come, come dear sir

(SEREBRIAKOFF SONIA *and* MARINA *go out*)

ELENA I am worn out with him I can hardly stand up

VOINITSKY You with him I with myself It's the third night now I have not slept

ELENA Things are not going very well in this house Your mother hates everything except her pamphlets and the Professor, the Professor is cross he won't trust me, and is afraid of you, Sonia is angry at her

father she is angry at me and hasn t spoken to me for two weeks now you hate my husband and openly scorn your mother I am irritable and twenty times today have been ready to cry Things are not going very well in this house

VOINITSKY Let s leave philosophy out of it!

ELENA Ivan you are educated and intelligen and you mu t understand that the world is going to ruin not from robbing not from fires but from hate enmity from all this petty squabbling Your business should not be to grumble but to make peace among us all

VOINITSKY First of all you make me make peace with myself! My darling (*Sei ing her hand*)

ELENA Stop it! (*Takes away her hand*) Go away!

VOINITSKY The rain will be over now and everything in na ure will be fresh and breathing Only I will not be refreshed by the storm Day and n ght like a fiend at my throat is the thought that my life is hopelessly lost No past it was stupidly spent on trifles and the present with all its absurdity is frightful Here they are my life and my love where shall I put them what shall I do with them? This feeling of mine is dying in vain like a ray of sunlight that has strayed into a p t and I myself am dying

ELENA When you talk to me of your love I get numb somehow and don t know what to say Forgi e m there is really nothing I can say to you (*She wants to go*) Good night

VOINITSKY (*Barring her way*) And if only you knew how I suffer from the thought that next to me in the same house another life is dying—yours! Your l fe

What are you waiting for? What curst philosophy is it in your way? Do understand understand

ELENA (*Looking at him closely*) Ivan Petrovich are you drunk?

VOINITSKY Perhaps perhaps

ELENA Where is the doctor?

VOINITSKY He is there spending the night with me Perhaps perhaps Anything is possible!

ELENA And today you were drinking? Why is that

VOINITSKY Because it is like living Somehow—like living Don t stand in my way Elena!

ELENA You never used to drink and never used to talk so much Go to bed! I am bored with you

VOINITSKY (*Seizing her hand*) My darling My beautiful!

ELENA (*Annoyed*) Let me alone After all it is revolting (*Goes out*)

VOINITSKY (*Alone*) She is gone (*A pause*) Ten years ago I used to meet her at my dear sister s She was seventeen then and I was thirty seven years old Why didn t I fall in love with her then and propose to her? It was so possible And by now she would have been my wife Yes Now we both would have been awakened by the storm she would have been frightened by the thunder and I would have held her in my arms and whispered Don t be afraid I am here Oh beautiful thoughts how wonderful I am even smiling but my God thoughts are getting tangled up in my head Why am I old Why doesn t she understand me Her rhetoric her idle moralizing her foolish idle thoughts about the end of the world—all that is hateful to me (*A pause*) Oh

how I was deceived! I adored that Professor that piti ful gouty creature I worked for him like an ox! Sonia and I squeezed out of this estate its last drop of juice like thrifty peasants we sold vegetable oil beans cottage cheese went hungry ourselves so that out of pennies and half pennies we might pile up thousands and send them to him I used to be proud of him and his learning I lived and breathed it! All he wrote and uttered seemed to me genius God and now here he is retired and you can see now the whole sum of his life After he is gone there won t be a single page of his work left behind he is absolutely unknown he is nothing! A soap bubble! And I ve been fooled I can see stupid fooled

(Enter ASTROFF *in a Prince Albert coat without a waistcoat and without a necktie he is a bit tipsy after him* TELEGIN *with a guitar)*

ASTROFF Play!

(TELEGIN *strums softly)*

ASTROFF *(To* VOINITSKY) Are you alone here? No ladies?

(Hands on hips sings softly)

Go away hut go away stove
The master has no room to lie down And I was awakened by the storm A downright soaking rain it was What time is it now?

VOINITSKY Ah th devil only knows

ASTROFF It seems to me I heard the voice of Elena Andreevna

VOINITSKY She was just here.

ASTROFF Superb woman! *(Looking at the medicine bottles on the table)* Medicines Every sort of pre scription From Kharkov and Moscow and Tula

All the towns in Russia have had enough of his gout Is he ill or is he pretending to be?

VOINITSKY Ill He s ill

(*A pause*)

ASTROFF Why are you so sad today? Is it the Professor you are sorry for, perhaps?

VOINITSKY Leave me alone

ASTROFF And in love with the Professor s wife perhaps?

VOINITSKY She is my friend

ASTROFF Already?

VOINITSKY What does that mean— already ?

ASTROFF A woman can be a man s friend only in some such sequence as this first a companion then a mistress, and then after that a friend

VOINITSKY That s a vulgar philosophy

ASTROFF So that s it Yes I must confess I m getting to be a vulgarian You can see too I m drunk Usually I get drunk only once a month When I m like that I get very brazen and impertinent to the very limit Then anything goes I undertake the most difficult operations and do them beautifully I paint the broadest plans for the future at such times I don t look like a fool to myself any more and believe that I am bringing an enormous boon to humanity enormous! At such times I have my own system of philosophy and all of you my little brothers seem to me such very small insects microbes (*To* TELEGIN) Waffles play!

TELEGIN My good friend with all my soul I should be glad to but do understand—they are asleep in the house!

ASTROFF Play!

(TELEGIN *strums softly*)

ASTROFF I need a drink Come on we still seem to have some cognac left And as soon as it begins to grow light we will go to my place All rightie? I have a medical orderly who never says all right but all ri htie A terrible rascal So all rightie? (*Seeing* SONIA *enter*) Pardon me I am without a necktie

(*Goes ou t quickly* TELEGIN *goes out after him*)

ONIA And you Uncle Vanya you got drunk again with the doctor Struck up a friendship you bri ht hawk s That one is always like this but why you? At your age it s not becoming

VOINITSKY Age has nothing to do with it When one has no real life one lives in illusions After all that s better than nothing

SONIA All our hay is mowed it rains every day e ery thing is rotting and you occupy yourself with illu sions You have neglected the farming completely— I m the only one that works and I have no strength left (*Ala med*) Uncle you ha e tears in your eyes!

VOINITSKY What tears? There s nothing nonsense You looked at me just no v as your dead mother used to My dear (*K ssing her hands and her face*) My sister my dear sister Wh ere is she now? If she knew! Ah if she kne v!

SONIA What? Uncle knew what?

VOINITSKY It s very hard I m not well Nothing Later It s nothing I will go

(*Goes out*)

SONIA (*Knocking at the door*) Mikhail Lvovich! Aren t you asle p? Just one minute!

ASTROFF (*From behind the door*) Right away! (*A little*

later he comes in he is already in his vest and neck tie) What is your command?

SONIA You go ahead and drink if it is not revolting to you, but I implore you, don t let Uncle drink It is bad for him

ASTROFF Very well We shall not drink any more (*A pause*) I will go home now Resolved and signed By the time they hitch up my team it will be dawn

SONIA It s raining Wait till morning

ASTROFF The storm is passing by only a fringe will hit us I m going And, please don t ask me any more to see your father I say to him—gout and he says rheumatism, I tell him to lie down, he sits up And today he wouldn t even talk to me

SONIA He is spoiled (*Going to the sideboard*) Would you like a little bite of something?

ASTROFF Well, I think I will

SONIA I like to have a bite at night, and it seems there s something on the sideboard In his time they say he had great success with women and the ladies spoiled him Here take some cheese

(*Both stand by the sideboard and eat*)

ASTROFF I haven t eaten anything today I only drank Your father has a difficult character (*Getting a bottle out of the sideboard*) May I? (*He drinks a glass*) Nobody is here and one can speak out straight You know, it seems to me you know I could not live through a month in your house I d suffocate in this air Your father who is all absorbed in his gout and books Uncle Vanya with his hypochondria your grandmother and to top it all your stepmother

SONIA What about my stepmother?

ASTROFF In a human being everything ought to be

beautiful face and clothes and soul and thoughts She is beautiful no disputing that but she merely eats and sleeps and walks and charms us all with her beauty—and nothing more She has no responsibilities whatever other people work for her isn t it so? An idle life can t be right (*A pause*) However per haps I m too hard on her I am not satisfied by life just as your Uncle Vanya is not and we both are getting to be nothing but grumblers

SONIA And you are not content with your life?

ASTROFF On the whole I like life but our rural Russian average man s life I can t bear it with all the strength in my soul I have a contempt for it and as far as my own personal life goes there is so help me God absolutely nothing good in it You know how it is when you are walking in the woods on a dark night and see far off a little light burning You don t mind either the fatigue or the darkness or the branches scratching you in the face I work—as you know very well—as nobody else does in the district fate never lets up her blow on me at times what I go through is unbearable but for me there is no little light in the distance For myself I am not expecting anything any more I don t like people It s a long time since I loved anyone

SONIA No one?

ASTROFF No one Only toward your nurse I feel a certain tenderness for old memories sake Peasants are all alike monotonous primitive living in dirt And it is hard to get on with the intelligentsia They tire one They all all our good friends will have shallow thoughts shallow feelings and will not see farther than their noses—the simple fact is they are stup d

And those that are cleverer and more important, are hysterical absorbed with analyzing themselves—they whine, they despise everything, they slander people cruelly, they approach a man sideways look at him out of the corner of an eye and decide Oh he is a psychopath! or He is a phrase maker! And when they don t know which label to stick on to my fore head, they say He s an odd one, odd! I love the woods, that is odd I don t eat meat—that s odd too There is no longer any spontaneous, pure, free kinship to nature or to people No and no!

(*He is about to drink*)

SONIA (*Stopping him*) No, I beg you, I implore you, don t drink any more

ASTROFF Why?

SONIA It is so unbecoming to you! You are refined, you have such a gentle voice More than that you are like nobody among the people I know, like nobody else—you are beautiful Then why do you want to look like ordinary people who drink and play cards? Oh, don t do that, I implore you! You always say that people don t create but merely destroy that that s given to them from above Then why, why, are you destroying yourself? Don t don t I entreat you, I im plore you!

ASTROFF (*Holding out his hand to her*) I won t drink any more

SONIA Give me your word

ASTROFF Word of honor

SONIA (*Shaking his hand vigorously*) Thank you!

ASTROFF Basta! I have sobered up See I am already completely sober and will stay like this to the end of my days (*Looking at his watch*) And so, let s go on

I say my time has already passed it s too late for me I am aged overworked I ve become common all my feelings have become blunted and I never seem able to attach myself to anyone I don t love anybody and I m already past loving anybody What still enthralls me is beauty I am not indifferent to it It seems to me that if Elena Andreevna only wanted to in one day she could set my head in a whirl But that is not love it s not belonging to someone—not—

(*Covering his eyes with his hand and shuddering*)

SONIA What is the matter with you?

ASTROFF Well During Lent my patient died under chloroform

SONIA It is time to forget about that (*A pause*) Tell me Mikhail Lvovich If I had a friend or a younger sister and if you learned that she well let us say loved you just what way would you take it?

ASTROFF (*Shrugging his shoulders*) I don t know Very likely no way I would let her understand that I cannot fall in love with her Besides I have other things on my mind Be that as it may it s already time for me to leave Good by my dear or else we won t sleep till morning (*Shaking her hand*) I ll go through the living room if you will let me—I am afraid your uncle might get hold of me (*Leaves*)

SONIA (*Alone*) He didn t say anything to me His soul and heart are still hidden from me but why do I feel so happy? (*Laughing from happiness*) I said to him You are refined noble you have such a gentle voice Was it the wrong moment for just that? His voice trembles caresses you— Here I feel him in

the air And when I told him about a younger sister, he didn t understand (*Wringing her hands*) Oh, how terrible it is that I am not pretty! How terrible! And I know I am not pretty, I know, I know

Last Sunday as we were leaving church, I heard them talking about me and one woman said She is kind, generous, but it s a pity she is not pretty not pretty

(*Enter* ELENA)

ELENA (*Opening the windows*) The storm has passed What fine air! (*A pause*) Where is the doctor?

SONIA Gone (*A pause*)

ELENA Sofia!

SONIA What?

ELENA How long will you be cross with me? We haven t done each other any wrong Why then should we be enemies? Enough is enough

SONIA I myself wanted to (*Embracing her*) Yes, enough of our being angry

ELENA Excellent (*Both are excited*)

SONIA Papa is lying down?

ELENA No, he is sitting in the living room We don t speak to each other for whole weeks you and I God knows why (*Seeing that the sideboard is open*) What is that?

SONIA Mikhail Lvovich had supper

ELENA And there is some wine Let us drink *bruderschaft*

SONIA Let s

ELENA Out of one glass (*Pours*) That s better (*They drink and kiss*)

SONIA It s a long time I wanted to make peace but somehow I felt embarrassed (*Crying*)

ELENA Why are you crying?

SONIA Nothing no special reason

ELENA Well there—there—(*Crying*) You foolish creature and I am crying too (*A pause*) You resent me because it looks as if I married your father calculatingly Then if you believe in oaths I swear to you—I married him for lo e I was infatuated with him as a learned and famous man My love was not real my love vas artificial but it seemed real to me then I am not guilty And you from the very day of the wedding have never stopped accusing me with your intelligent suspecting eyes

SONIA Well peace peace! Let us forget

ELENA Don t look at it like that—tisn t like you One must have faith in everybody otherwise life is impossible

(*A pa use*)

SONIA Tell me in all honesty as a friend are you happy?

ELENA No

SONIA I knew it Here s one more question Tell me frankly—would you have liked to have a young husband?

ELENA What a child you still are Of course I should have (*Laugh ng*) Now ask me something else ask me

SONIA Do you like the doctor?

ELENA Yes very much

SONIA (*Laughing*) I have a silly face haven t I? Here he is gone and I keep hearing his voice and his steps and when I look at a dark v indov I see his face there Let me try to say v hat I mean—but I can t talk so loud I am ashamed Let s go to my room there

we'll talk Do I seem silly to you? Confess tell me something about him

ELENA But what?

SONIA He is clever He can do anything is able to do anything He heals the sick and he plants woodlands

ELENA It isn't a matter of woods and medicine My dear, understand it's the genius! And do you know what genius means? Bravery, a free mind a broad sweep When he plants a little tree he is already imagining what it will be like in a thousand years he is already dreaming of the happiness of mankind Such people are rare, one must love them He drinks, he is sometimes rude—but what harm is there in that! A genius in Russia can't be too much of a saint Think yourself what a life that doctor has! impassable mud on the roads frost blinding snow enormous distances people crude and wild poverty all around diseases In such a setting it is hard for anyone who works and struggles day after day to keep himself steady and sober at forty (*Kisses her*) From the bottom of my soul I wish you—you deserve happiness (*Getting up*)—I am a tedious, passing face—in music and in my husband's house in all the novels—the truth is everywhere I was merely a passing face The truth is Sonia, when you stop and think of it I am very very unhappy! (*Walking on the stage excitedly*) There's no happiness for me in this world No! Why are you laughing?

SONIA (*Laughing covering her face*) I am so happy so happy!

ELENA I feel like playing I would like to play something now

SONIA Do play (*Embraces her*) I cannot sleep Do play!

ELENA Right away Your father is not asleep When he is ill music irritates him Go ask If he is quite well then I ll play Go on

SONIA Right away (*Goes out*)

(*The u atchman is tapping in the garden*)

ELENA It is a long time since I ve played I shall play and cry—cry like a fool (*Thro igh the window*) Is it you tapping Efim?

THE VOICE OF THE WATCHMAN Me!

ELENA Don t tap the master is not well

THE VOICE OF THE WATCHMAN I ll go right away! (*Whistles*) Hey you Nicky! Boris! Nicky! (*Anothe u histle*) (*A pause*)

SONIA (*Retu rning*) No you cannot!

Curtain

ACT THREE

Living room in the house of SERFBRIAKOFF *Th ee doo s to the right to the left and in the middl Dayt me*

VOINITSKY SONIA *are s tting dov n and* ELE A ANDREEVNA *is v alking a ound the room busy u ith her thoughts*

VOINITSKY Herr Professor deigned to express a wish that we all gather today in this living room by one

o'clock (*Looks at the clock*) Quarter to one He wished to disclose something to the world

ELENA Perhaps some kind of business

VOINITSKY He hasn't got any business He writes nonsense, grumbles, and is jealous, and nothing else

SONIA (*Reproachfully*) Uncle!

VOINITSKY Well well, sorry (*Pointing to* ELENA) Do admire she walks around and sways a bit from laziness Very sweet! Very!

ELENA All day long you buzz always buzzing—aren't you tired of it (*With anguish*) I am dying of boredom, I don't know what to do

SONIA (*Shrugging her shoulders*) Isn't there enough to do? If you wanted to

ELENA For example?

SONIA Occupy yourself with running the house teaching the children caring for the sick Is that so little When you and Papa were not here Uncle Vanya and I went to the market ourselves to sell the flour

ELENA I don't know how Besides it is not interesting It is only in sociological novels they teach and cure sick peasants and how can I suddenly for no reason go to curing and teaching them?

SONIA And in the same way I don't understand how not to go and not to teach Wait and you will get used to it (*Embracing her*) Don't be bored darling (*Laughing*) You are bored you can't find a place for yourself and boredom and idleness are infectious Look how Uncle Vanya does nothing but walk behind you like a shadow I dropped my work and ran here to talk with you I am getting lazy I can't do anything Doctor Mikhail Lvovich used to come to us very seldom once a month it was hard to coax him

ELENA I feel like playing I would like to play something now

SONIA Do play (*Embraces her*) I cannot sleep Do play!

ELENA Right away Your father is not asleep When he is ill music irritates him Go ask If he is quite well then I ll play Go on

SONIA Right away (*Goes out*)

(*The watchman is tapping in the garden*)

ELENA It is a long time since I ve played I shall play and cry—cry like a fool (*Through the window*) Is it you tapping Efim?

THE VOICE OF THE WATCHMAN Me!

ELENA Don t tap the master is not well

THE VOICE OF THE WATCHMAN I ll go right away! (*Whistles*) Hey you Nicky! Boris! Nicky! (*Another whistle*) (*A pause*)

SONIA (*Returning*) No you cannot!

Curtain

ACT THREE

Living room in the house of SEREBRIAKOFF *Three doors to the right to the left and in the middle Daytime*

VOINITSKY SONIA *are sitting down and* ELENA ANDREEVNA *is walking around the room busy with her thoughts*

VOINITSKY Herr Professor deigned to express a wish that we all gather today in this living room by one

SONIA I am not pretty.

ELENA You have beautiful hair.

SONIA No! (*Looking back to glance at herself in the mirror*) No! When a woman is not pretty they tell her: You have beautiful eyes, you have beautiful hair. I have loved him now for six years, loved him more than my own mother; every minute I hear his voice, feel the touch of his hand, and I watch the door, waiting, it always seems to me that he will be coming in. And here you see I keep looking for you to talk about him. He is here every day now, but does not look at me, doesn't see me. . . . It's such agony! I haven't any hope, no, no! (*In despair*) Oh, God, grant me strength. . . . I prayed all night. . . . I often come to him, start talking to him myself, look into his eyes. . . . I have no more pride. I've no power to control myself. . . . I could not contain myself and yesterday I confessed to Uncle Vanya that I am in love . . . and all the servants know I love him. Everybody knows.

ELENA And he?

SONIA No. He never notices me.

ELENA (*Meditating*) A strange man he is. . . . Do you know what? Let me. I'll talk to him. . . . Carefully, by hinting. . . . (*A pause*) Really, how long can you be in some uncertain state! Do let me! (SONIA *nods her head to agree*) That's wonderful. He loves you or he doesn't love you—that won't be hard to find out. Don't be embarrassed, my little dove, don't worry—I'll question him carefully, he won't even know. All we want is to find out: Yes or No? (*A pause*) If no, then let him stop coming here. Isn't that so? (SONIA *nods her head to agree*) Easier when you don't see

him We won t file it away in a box we ll question him right now He intended to show me some sketches Go tell him I want to see him

SONIA (*In great excitement*) You will tell me the whole truth?

ELENA Yes of course It seems to me the truth whatever it is is not so frightful as uncertainty after all You may count on me little dove

SONIA Yes yes I ll tell him that you want to see his charts—(*Going she stops near the door*) No uncertainty is better After all there is hope—

ELENA What is it?

SONIA Nothing (*Goes out*)

ELENA (*Alone*) There is nothing worse than when you know someone s secret and are no help (*Meditating*) He is not in love with her—that is clear but why doesn t he marry her? She is not pretty but for a country doctor at his age she would be a fine wife Intelligent, so kind true No it isn t that not that (*A pause*) I understand this poor girl She lives in the midst of uninterrupted boredom Instead of people she has some sort of gray shadows wandering around her what they say is trifling all they know is that they eat and they drink and they sleep And then sometimes he comes not like the others handsome interesting charming as if in the twilight rises a bright moon Oh to give in to the charm of such a man to forget yourself It looks as if I were a little carried away myself Yes I am bored without him here I am smiling when I think of him

Uncle Vanya says that in my veins perhaps flows the blood of a water nymph Let yourself go at least once in your life What then? Perhaps it must

be so. . . To fly away like a free bird, away from you all, from your sleepy faces, from your conversations, to forget that you exist in the world. . . But I am cowardly. I'm shy. . . I'll be tortured by my conscience. . . You see, He comes here every day. I can guess why he is here and I already feel myself guilty; I'm ready to fall on my knees before Sonia and ask her forgiveness, and to cry.

ASTROV (*Enters with a chart*) Good morning. (*Shaking her hand*) You'd like to see my . . .

HELENA You promised yesterday to show me your work . . . are you free?

ASTROV Oh, of course. (*Spreads the chart on the card table and fastens it with thumb tacks*) Where were you born?

HELENA (*Helping him with the chart*) In Petersburg.

ASTROV And received your education?

HELENA In the conservatory.

ASTROV This may not interest you.

HELENA Why? It's true I don't know the country, but I read a great deal.

ASTROV Here in the house I have my own table . . . In Ivan's room. When I'm utterly tired out and in a complete stupor, I drop everything and run to this house and amuse myself with this thing here an hour or so. . . Ivan and Sonia click the counters and I sit near them at my own table, drawing, and I feel warm, at peace, and the cricket chirps. But this pleasure I don't allow myself often, once a month. . . (*Pointing at the chart*) Now look here at this. The picture of our district as it was fifty years ago. The dark green and light green colors are forests; half of the whole area is forests. The red crosshatches on

the green show where elks and goats used to be—I am showing here both *flora* and *fauna* On this lake used to live swans geese ducks and as the old men say a powerful lot of all kinds of birds you saw nothing but birds They floated like a cloud Besides the villages and small towns you see various settlements were scattered farms monasteries water mills There were a great many cattle and horses you can tell by the blue color For example in this district the blue is thick whole herds were there, and each farm owned three horses (*A pause*) Now we ll look lower down What there was twenty five years ago Only a third of the whole area is woodland There are no longer any goats but there are elks The green and the blue colors are already paler And so on and so forth Now here s the third part a picture of the d s trict today The green comes here and there but nct solid only in spots the elks have disappeared the swans and the grouse Of the villages settle ments monasteries mills there is not even a trace On the whole a picture of gra lual plain degenera tion which apparently needs only some ten or fifteen years more to be complete You will say that there are cultural influences at v ork here that the old life must naturally have yielded place to the ne v Yes I under stand that if in place of these destroyed forests roads were laid out railroads, if there v ere mills factories schools—people would become healthier rich r more intelligent but there is nothing of the kind! In the district the same swamps mosquitoes the same absence of roads poverty typhus diphtheria fires We have here a case of degeneration that results from

a struggle that's beyond men's strength for existence degeneration caused by sloth, by ignorance, by the complete absence of any conscience when a cold, hungry, sick man to save what life he has left, for his children, instinctively, subconsciously grabs at every thing that might satisfy his hunger, or warm him, destroys everything, without a thought of tomorrow Nearly everything is already destroyed and in its place there is nothing created (*Coldly*) I can see by your face that this is not interesting to you

ELENA But I understand so little of that

ASTROFF There is nothing to understand, it's simply un interesting

ELENA To be frank my mind is not on that Forgive me I must do a little cross-questioning and I am em barrassed and don't know how to begin

ASTROFF A cross-examination?

ELENA Yes, a cross-examination, but rather inno cent Let's sit down! (*They sit down*) The matter concerns one young person We shall talk like honest people, as friends, without beating about the bush We shall talk and then forget what the talk was about Yes?

ASTROFF Yes

ELENA The matter concerns my stepdaughter Sonia Do you like her?

ASTROFF Yes, I respect her

ELENA Do you like her as a woman?

ASTROFF (*Not at once*) No

ELENA Two or three words more—and that's the end of it Have you noticed nothing?

ASTROFF Nothing

ELENA (*Taking his hand*) You don t love her I see it in your eyes she s suffering—understand it and stop coming here

ASTROFF (*Getting up*) My season has already passed Besides I have no time (*Shrugging his shoulders*) When can I find it (*He is embarrassed*)

ELENA Pooh what a disagreeable conversation! I am as upset as if I were dragging twenty tons Well thank God we have finished I et us forget as if we had not talked at all and and you ride away You are an intelligent man you will understand (*A pause*) I am blushing red all over

ASTROFF If you had told me a month or two ago then I possibly would have considered it but now (*Shrugs his shoulde s*) And if she is suffering then of course There is only one thing I do not understand Why did you have to have this cross-examination? (*Looks into he eyes and moves a finger from side to side*) You are sly!

ELENA What does that mean?

ASTROFF (*La ghing*) Sly! Let us suppose Sonia is suffering I readily admit it but why this cross-examination of yours? (*With mi ch animat on not letting her talk*) Permit me don t make an astonished face you know very well why I come here every day Why and for whose sake I come that you know very well You darling bird of prey don t look at me like that I am a wise old sparrow

ELENA (*Incredi lou s*) Bird of prey? I don t understand a bit of it

ASTROFF A beautiful fluffy little thing you must have victims! Here I am already a whole month not doing anything I have dropped everything I look

greedily for you—and this you like hugely Well then? I am conquered, you knew it even without the questioning (*Folds his arms and bows his head*) I give up Here, eat me!

ELENA Have you lost your mind?

ASTROFF (*Laughing through his teeth*) You are sly

ELENA Oh, I am better and more superior than you think! I swear to you! (*Wants to go*)

ASTROFF (*barring her way*) I will leave today I will not be here again, but (*Taking her hand looking around*) Where are we going to see each other? Tell me quickly Where? Someone might come in here, tell me quickly (*Passionately*) What a wonderful, luscious One kiss For me just to kiss your fragrant hair

ELENA I swear to you

ASTROFF (*Not letting her talk*) Why swear? Mustn t swear No use for needless words Oh, how beautiful! What hands! (*Kisses her hands*)

ELENA But that s enough after all go away (*Withdraws her hands*) You forget yourself

ASTROFF Tell me, tell me where will we see each other tomorrow? (*Holds her by the waist*) You can see, it can t be escaped, we ve got to see each other

(*He kisses her at that point* VOINITSKY *enters with a bouquet of roses and stops at the door*)

ELENA (*Not seeing* VOINITSKY) Have mercy leave me alone (*Puts her head on* ASTROFF S *breast*) No! (*She moves to go*)

ASTROFF (*Restraining her by the waist*) Come tomorrow to the wood about two o clock Yes? Yes? You will come?

ELENA (*Noticing* VOINITSKY) Let me go! (*In great

ELENA (*Taking his hand*) You don t love her I see it in your eyes she s suffering—understand it and stop coming here

ASTROFF (*Getting up*) My season has already passed Besides I have no time (*Shrugging his shoulders*) When can I find it (*He is embarrassed*)

ELENA Pooh what a disagreeable conversation! I am as upset as if I were dragging twenty tons Well thank God we have finished Let us forget as if we had not talked at all and and you ride away You are an intelligent man you will understand (*A pause*) I am blushing red all over

ASTROFF If you had told me a month or two ago then I possibly would have considered it but now (*Shrugs his shoulders*) And if she is suffering then of course There is only one thing I do not understand Why did you have to have this cross-examination? (*Looks into her eyes and moves a finger from side to side*) You are sly!

ELENA What does that mean?

ASTROFF (*Laughing*) Sly! Let us suppose Sonia is suffering I readily admit it but why this cross-examination of yours? (*With much animation not letting her talk*) Permit me don t make an astonished face you know very well why I come here every day Why and for whose sake I come that you know very well You darling bird of prey don t look at me like that I am a wise old sparrow

ELENA (*Incredulous*) Bird of prey? I don t understand a bit of it

ASTROFF A beautiful fluffy little thing you must have victims! Here I am already a whole month not doing anything I have dropped everything I look

SONIA (*Approaching* ELENA, *impatiently*) What did he say?

ELENA Later

SONIA You are trembling You are upset (*Peering inquisitively into her face*) I understand He said, that he will not be here any more yes? (*A pause*) Say it Yes?

(ELENA *nods her head*)

SEREBRIAKOFF (*To* TELEGIN) One can still make peace with illness, no matter what, but what I cannot digest is this regime of country life. I have a feeling as if I had fallen from the earth on to some foreign planet Sit down ladies and gentlemen, I beg you Sonia! (SONIA *does not hear him she stands with her head down sadly*) Sonia! (*A pause*) She doesn t hear (*To* MARINA) And you, Nurse, sit down (NURSE *sits down and knits on a stocking*) I beg you, ladies and gentlemen Hang your ears, so to speak, on a peg of attention (*He laughs*)

VOINITSKY (*Excitedly*) Maybe I m not needed Shall I leave?

SEREBRIAKOFF No, you are needed here more than anybody

VOINITSKY What do you want from me?

SEREBRIAKOFF You But why are you angry? (*A pause*) If I am guilty in your eyes of anything, then pardon me please

VOINITSKY Drop that tone Let's proceed with business What do you need?

(*Enter* MARIA VASILIEVNA)

SEPEBRIAKOFF Here is Mama I ll begin, ladies and gentlemen (*A pause*) I invited you, ladies and gen

tlemen so that I might explain that the Inspector General is on his way However jokes aside It is a serious matter I ladies and gentlemen gathered you together to ask you for help and advice and knowing your undying courtesy I hope I will get it I am a learned man a bookworm and have always been a stranger to practical life Do without directions of well informed people I cannot and I beg you Ivan Petrovich and you here Ilya Ilyich and you *Maman*

The fact is *manet omnes una nox* that is we are all mortal I am old sick and therefore find it timely to regulate my property terms in so far as that concerns my family My life is already finished I am not thinking of myself but I have a young wife a maiden-daughter (*A pause*) To go on living in the country is impossible for me We are not made for country life Yet to live in town on the income we get from this estate is impossible If we sell let s say a wood that would be an unusual measure which we cannot do every year One must find such measures as would guarantee us a permanent more or less definite figure of income I have thought of one such measure and have the honor to propose it for your discussion Aside from details I will state it along general lines Our estate gives an average of not more than two percent I propose to sell it If the proceed we convert into interest bearing paper then we will receive from four to five percent and I think there will even be a surplus of several thousand which will allow us to buy a small villa in Finland

VOINITSKY Wait my ears must be deceiving me Repeat what you said

SEREBRIAKOFF To convert money into interest-bearing

paper, and with the surplus, what is left, buy a villa in Finland

VOINITSKY Not Finland You said something else

SEREBRIAKOFF I propose to sell the estate

VOINITSKY That's it You will sell the estate, excellent, a fine idea and where would you order me to go with my old mother and with Sonia here?

SEREBRIAKOFF All this we will discuss in good time Not everything at once

VOINITSKY Wait Apparently, up to now I have had not a drop of common sense Up to now I was so stupid as to think that this estate belongs to Sonia My late father bought this estate as a dowry for my sister Up to now I have been naive, have understood that this was not a Turkish law but Russian, I thought that the estate passed from my sister to Sonia

SEREBRIAKOFF Yes The estate belongs to Sonia Who is arguing that? Without Sonia's consent I would not decide to sell Besides what I propose to do is for Sonia's benefit

VOINITSKY This is incomprehensible, incomprehensible! Either I have lost my mind, or or

MARIA VASILIEVNA Jean, don't contradict Alexander You must believe he knows better than we do what is good and what is bad

VOINITSKY No, let me have some water (*Drinking the water*) Say whatever you want to, whatever you want to!

SEREBRIAKOFF I don't understand why you excite yourself I don't say that my project is ideal If everybody finds it unsuitable then I will not insist

(*A pause*)

TELEGIN (*Confusedly*) Your Excellency I nourish to-

ward learning not only reverence, but feelings of kin ship as well My brother Gregory Ilyich s wife s brother perhaps you know him Konstantine Trofimovich Lakedemonov was a magistrate

VOINITSKY Hold on there, Waffles we are talking about business Wait later on

(*To* SEREBRIAKOFF)

Here you ask him This estate was bought from his uncle

SEREBRIAKOFF Ah and why should I ask? What for?

VOINITSKY This estate was bought with things as they were at that time for ninety five thousand Father paid down only seventy and there was a debt left of twenty five thousand Now listen This estate would not have been bought had I not given up my inheritance in favor of my sister whom I loved deeply As if that were not enough for ten years I worked like an ox and paid off the entire debt

SEREBRIAKOFF I regret that I began this conversation

VOINITSKY The estate is clear of debts and intact only because of my personal efforts And here when I have grown old they want to throw me out on my neck!

SEREBRIAKOFF I don t understand what you are driving at

VOINITSKY *For twenty five years I have managed this* estate worked sent you money like a most conscientious clerk and during all that time you not once thanked me All the time—both in my youth and now —you paid me five hundred roubles a year for wages —fit for a beggar—and you never once thought of increasing it by even one rouble!

SEREBRIAKOFF Ivan Petrovich how could I know? I

am not a practical man and understand nothing You could have yourself increased it as much as you wanted to

VOINITSKY Why didn t I steal? Why don t you all hold me in contempt for not having stolen? It would have been just and now I would not be a beggar!

MARIA VASILIEVNA (*Sternly*) Jean!

TELEGIN (*Excitedly*) Vanya, my friend don t, don t I am trembling Why spoil good relations? (*Kissing him*) Don t!

VOINITSKY For twenty five years with this mother here I sat like a mole inside these four walls All our thoughts and feelings belonged to you alone In the daytime we talked of you, of your works, felt proud of you, pronounced your name with reverence the nights we wasted reading magazines and books, which I now despise from the depths

TELEGIN Don t, Vanya, don t I cannot

SEREBRIAKOFF (*Indignantly*) I don t understand, what do you want?

VOINITSKY You were to us a creature of the highest order and your articles we knew by heart But now my eyes are open! I see everything! You write about art, but you understand nothing of art! All your works that I used to love, are not worth a brass penny! You fooled us!

SEREBRIAKOFF Ladies and gentlemen! Do make him stop, after all! I shall go!

ELENA ANDREEVNA Ivan Petrovich I demand that you stop talking! Do you hear?

VOINITSKY I will not stop talking! (*Barring* SEREBRIAKOFF S *way*) Wait, I haven t finished! You have ruined my life! I have not lived, have not lived!

Thanks to you I destroyed swept away the best years of my life! You are my worst enemy!

TELEGIN I cannot cannot I'll go (*Leaves in great agitation*)

SEREBRIAKOFF What do you want from me? And what right have you to talk to me in such a tone? Imbecile! If the estate is yours then take it, I don't need it

ELENA This very minute I'm going away from this hell! (*Shouting*) I can't bear it any longer

VOINITSKY My life is lost to me! I am talented intelligent brave Had I lived a normal life there might have come out of me a Schopenhauer a Dostoevski I am through with keeping accounts *making reports I am losing my mind* Mother I am in despair! Mother!

MARIA VASILIEVNA (*Sternly*) Listen to Alexander!

SONIA (*Kneels down before the nurse and huddles close to her*) Nurse darling! Nurse darling!

VOINITSKY Mother! What am I to do? Don't don't I know myself what I should do! (*To* SEREBRIAKOFF) You will remember me! (*Goes out through the middle door*)

(MARIA VASILIEVNA *goes after him*)

SEREBRIAKOFF Ladies and gentlemen but what is it after all? *Take this madman away from me! I cannot* live with him under the same roof! He lives there (*Pointing to the middle door*) almost next to me Let him move to the village into some cottage or I will move away from here but remain with him in the same house I cannot

ELENA (*To her husband*) We will go away from here today! We must make arrangements at once

SEREBRIAKOFF Contemptible you are!

SONIA (*Kneeling turns to her father nervously through her tears*) One must be merciful Papa! Uncle Vanya and I are so miserable! (*Controlling her despair*) One must be merciful! Try to remember when you were younger, Uncle Vanya and Grandmother translated books for you at night, copied your papers every night, every night! Uncle Vanya and I worked without any rest, we were afraid to spend a penny on ourselves and sent everything to you We did not eat our bread free I am not saying the right thing, not the right thing I am saying, but you have to understand us, Papa One must be merciful!

ELENA (*Excited to her husband*) Alexander, for God s sake, have it out with him I implore you

SEREBRIAKOFF Very well, I shall have it out with him I am not accusing him of anything I am not angry, but, please agree with me, his conduct is at least strange As you wish, I will go to him

(*Goes out through the middle door*)

ELENA Be gentler with him quiet him

(*Goes out after him*)

SONIA (*Nestling against* MARINA) Nurse! Nurse!

MARINA It s all right my child The geese will cackle —and then stop cackle—and stop

SONIA Nurse!

MARINA (*Patting her head*) You are shivering as if it were frost! Well, well, my little orphan, God is merciful Some linden tea or some raspberry, and it will pass, you ll forget it Don t be sad, my little orphan

(*Looking at the middle door fiercely*) There, you geese—

(*Offstage there is a shot one hears* ELENA *scream* SONIA *shudders*)

IARINA Oh you!

SEREBRIAKOFF (*Runs in swaying with fright*) Hold him! Hold him! He has lost his mind

(ELENA *and* VOINITSKY *struggle in the doorway*)

ELENA (*Trying to grab the revolver from him*) Give it to me! Give it to me I tell you!

VOINITSKY Let me go Elena! Let me go! (*Freeing himself runs in and looks around for* SEREBRIAKOFF) Where is he? Ah there he is! (*Shoots at him*) Bang! (*A pause*) Didn t hit? Missed again? (*Angrily*) Ah the devil devil devil take you

(*Beating the revolver on the floor and sitting down exhausted in a chair* SEREBRIAKOFF *is stunned* ELENA *leaning against the wall is fainting*)

ELENA Take me away from here! Take me away kill me but I cannot stay here cannot!

VOINITSKY (*In despair*) Oh what am I doing! What am I doing

SONIA (*Softly*) Nurse darling! Nurse darling!

Curtain

ACT FOUR

IVAN PETROVICH S *room It is his bedroom and also is the office of the estate Near the window a large table with books for cash accounts and papers of all kinds a desk bookcases scales A smaller table for* ASTROFF *on this table there are paints and drawing instruments next to them a portfolio There is a bird cage with a starling On*

the wall a map of Africa which apparently is of no use to anyone here There s an enormous sofa upholstered in oilcloth To the left—a door leading into bedrooms to the right—a door leading into a passage at the door to the right a mat is spread so that the peasants won t muddy up the floor

It is an autumn evening all is tranquil TELEGIN *and* MARINA *sit facing each other and wind wool for stockings*

TELEGIN You be faster, Marina Timofeevna, because they will be calling us right away to say good by They ve already ordered the horses brought

MARINA (*Trying to wind faster*) There is not much left

TELEGIN To Kharkov they are going And there they will live

MARINA And it is better so

TELEGIN Got scared Elena she says, I do not wish to live here one hour she says let us go and let us go Let s live," she says in Kharkov, we ll look around and then we will send for our things she says Going away light, no goods to carry It means, Marina Timofeevna, that it s not their fate to live here Not their fate (*Somewhat pompously*) A fatal predestination

MARINA And it is better so Just a while ago they raised a racket firing what a shame!

TELEGIN Yes, it s a subject worthy of the brush of Aivazovski

MARINA I d hope my eyes could not see it (*A pause*) We ll live again, the way it used to be in the old days In the morning shortly after seven the tea shortly

after noon the dinner in the evening sit down to supper everything in its proper order the way people have them Christian like (*With a sigh*) It is a long time since I sinner that I am have eaten noodle soup

TELEGIN Yes for a long time they have not made noodle soup here (*A pause*) A long time This morning Marina Timofeevna I walked through the village and the storekeeper shouted after me Hey you sponger! And very bitter I began to feel!

MARINA And don t you pay attention friend All of us are spongers on God Like you like Sonia like Ivan —nobody sits doing nothing we are all working! Everybody Where is Sonia?

TELEGIN In the garden Keeps walking with the doctor looking for Ivan They are afraid he might lay hands on himself

MARINA And where is his pistol?

TELEGIN (*Whispering*) I hid it in the cellar!

MARINA (*With a smile*) Oh our sins!

(*Enter from outside* VOINITSKY *and* ASTROFF)

VOINITSKY Leave me alone (*To* MARINA *and* TELEGIN) Go away from here leave me alone if only for one hour! I cannot stand being treated like someone s ward I don t need a guardian

TELEGIN Right off Vanya

(*Goes out on tiptoes*)

MARINA You geese—goo—goo—

(*Gathers up the wool and goes out*)

VOINITSKY Leave me alone!

ASTROFF With much pleasure I should have left here a long time ago but I repeat I am not leaving till you return what you took from me

VOINITSKY I did not take anything from you.

ASTROFF Seriously—I mean it—don t detain me I should have left a long time ago

VOINITSKY I took nothing from you

(*Both sit down*)

ASTROFF Yes? Well then, I shall wait a little, and then, excuse me, I ll have to use force We will tie you up and search you I am saying this seriously absolutely

VOINITSKY As you wish (*A pause*) To play such a fool to fire twice and not to hit even once! That I ll never forgive myself for!

ASTROFF Well if you feel like shooting why not fire at your own forehead?

VOINITSKY (*Shrugging his shoulders*) Strange I attempted a murder, and they don t arrest me don t prosecute me That means they consider me insane (*He gives an angry laugh*) I—insane, and they are not insane They are not insane who under the guise of a professor, a learned wizard, hide their lack of talent and their stupidity and crying heartlessness They are not insane who marry old men and then in front of everybody s eyes deceive them I saw, saw how you embraced her!

ASTROFF Yes s, embraced her—and this for you

(*Thumbs his nose*)

VOINITSKY (*Looking at the door*) No, it s the earth is insane that still holds you

ASTROFF And that is silly

VOINITSKY Why not—I am insane irresponsible, I have the right to say silly things

ASTROFF That s an old story You are not insane, you are simply odd A little clown There was a time when I too regarded every person who was odd as sick abnormal, and now I am of the opinion that the

normal state of man is to be odd You are entirely normal

VOINITSKY (*Covering his face with his hands*) I'm ashamed! If you knew how ashamed I am! This sharp feeling of shame is not like just pain It's unbearable! (*Bending down on the table*) What am I to do? What am I to do?

ASTROFF Nothing

VOINITSKY Give me something! Oh my God I am forty seven years old if—suppose I'll live till sixty—if so I still have thirteen years left That long! How shall I live through these thirteen years? What will I do what will I fill them with? Oh do you understand (*Convulsively pressing* ASTROFF'S *hand*) Do you understand if I could only live through what is left of life somehow differently To wake up on a clear quiet morning and to feel that you have begun to live anew that all the past is forgotten faded away like smoke (*Crying*) To begin a new life teach me how to begin from what to begin

ASTROFF (*Annoyed sharply*) Eh you! What new life is there? Our situation yours and mine is hopeless

VOINITSKY Yes?

ASTROFF I am convinced of that

VOINITSKY Give me something (*Pointing to his heart*) Here insid me it burns

ASTROFF (*Angrily*) Stop it! (*Relenting*) Those who will live a hundred two hundred years after us and who will despise us because we have lived our lives so stupidly and so without any taste—those perhaps, will find the way how to be happy And there's but one hope for you and me The hope that when we'll be sleeping in our coffins we might be visited by

dreams, perhaps even pleasant ones (*Sighing*) Yes brother In the whole district there were only two decent, cultured men you and I But in some ten years, narrow minded life, despised life has strangled us with its rotten fumes It has poisoned our blood and we have become just as much vulgarians as the rest of them (*In a lively voice*) But, however you stop trying to talk the toothache away Give me back, you, what you took from me

VOINITSKY I did not take anything from you

ASTROFF You took from my traveling medicine chest a jar of morphine (*A pause*) Listen if you, no matter what, want to commit suicide then go into the woods and shoot yourself there The morphine, however give it back to me, or there will be talk guesses, they will think I gave it to you As for me, it is enough that I will have to cut you open Do you think that would be interesting?

(*Enter* SONIA)

VOINITSKY Leave me alone

ASTROFF (*To* SONIA) Sonia your uncle stole a jar of morphine from my medicine chest and won t give it back Tell him that after all that s not very intelligent of him Besides I haven t time for it, it s time for me to go

SONIA Uncle Vanya, did you take the morphine?

(*A pause*)

ASTROFF He took it I am certain of that

SONIA Give it back Why do you want to frighten us? (*Tenderly*) Give it back, Uncle Vanya! I am just as unhappy as you are, maybe but I don t despair I bear it and I will bear it till the end of my life Then you bear it too (*A pause*) Give it back! (*Kisses his hand*)

My dear nice Uncle darling give it back! (*Crying*) You are kind you will take pity on us and give it back You bear it too Uncle! Bear it!—

VOINITSKY (*Gets the jar from the table and gives it to* ASTROFF) Here take it! (*To* SONIA) But we must get to work quickly quickly do something or else I can not cannot

SONIA Yes yes to ork As soon as we see them off ve will sit do vn to work (*Nervously handling the papers on the desk*) We have let everything go

ASTROFF (*Putting the jar into his medicine chest and fastening the straps*) No v I can start off

ELENA (*Entering*) Ivan are you here? We are leaving now Go to Alexander he wants to tell you some thing

SONIA Go on Uncle Vanya (*Taking* VOINITSKY *by the arm*) Let s go Papa and you must make peace You really must

(SONIA *and* VOINITSKY *go out*)

ELENA I am leaving (*Proffers her hand to* ASTROFF)

ASTROFF Already?

ELENA They have already brought the horses

ASTROFF Good by

ELEN Today you promised me that you would go a vay from here

ASTROFF I remember I am leaving now (*A pause*) Were you frightened? (*Takes her hand*) Is it really so alarming?

ELENA Yes

ASTROFF And maybe you would stay! Would you? To-morro v at the forester s

ELENA No I ve already decided and that is why I look at you so bravely because our departure is

already decided I ask you one thing think better of me I want you to respect me

ASTROFF Ah! (*With a gesture of impatience*) Stay here, I beg you Confess that you have nothing to do in this world you have no aim whatsoever, you have nothing to occupy your attention with and sooner or later anyhow you ll give up to your feelings—you can t escape it So it is better not in Kharkov and not somewhere in Kursk but here in nature s bosom—at least it is poetic, very beautiful even Here at the forester s there are houses that are half in ruins quite to Turgenev s taste

ELENA How funny you are I am angry with you, but yet I ll be thinking of you with pleasure You are an interesting, original man We shall never see each other again, and so why hide it? I was even carried away a little by you So let us shake each other s hand and part as friends Don t think evil of me

ASTROFF (*Shaking her hand*) Yes, go away from here (*Meditating*) It seems you are a good, sincere person but it seems also there is something strange in your whole nature You came here with your husband, and everyone who worked here bustling about or building something, had to drop work and for the entire summer they occupied themselves with your husband s gout and you Both of you, he and you —infected us with your idleness I was carried away, I have not done anything for a whole month, and during that time people were ailing, and the peasants were grazing their cattle in my woods, so that no matter where you and your husband went you brought destruction everywhere I am joking of course, yet it s strange how I am convinced that

if you should stay on there would be an enormous devastation And I would perish and you too would not survive Well go away *Finita la commedia*

ELENA (*Takes a pencil from his desk and hides it quickly*) I am taking this pencil to remember you by

ASTROFF It s odd somehow We have known each other and suddenly for some reason—we will never see each other again And that s how it is in this world While no one is here until Uncle Vanya comes in with a bouquet let me kiss you for good by Yes? (*Kissing her cheek*) So there it s all beautiful

ELENA I wish you the best of everything (*Glancing around quickly*) No matter what once in a lifetime! (*Embracing him impetuously They both back away from each other*) I must go

ASTROFF Go away quickly If the horses are ready then start right off

ELENA They seem to be coming

(*They stand there listening*)

ASTROFF *Finita!*

(*Enter* SEREBRIAKOFF VOINITSKY MARIA VASILIEVNA *with a book* TELEGIN *and* SONIA)

SEREBRIAKOFF (*To* VOINITSKY) He who remembers the past should have his eye plucked out After what happened in those few hours I have lived through so much and have thought so much that it seems to me I could write an entire treatise for the edification of posterity on how one should live I accept your apologies willingly and beg you myself to forgive me Good by!

(*Exchanges kisses with* VOINITSKY *three times*)

VOINITSKY You will receive what you used to receive accurately Everything will be as always

(ELENA *embraces* SONIA)

SEREBRIAKOFF (*Kissing* MARIA VASILIEVNA S *hand*) Mama

MARIA VASILIEVNA (*kissing him*) Alexander, have an other picture taken and send it to me You know, how dear you are to me

TELEGIN Good by, Your Excellency! Don t forget us!

SEREBRIAKOFF (*Having kissed his daughter*) Good by Everybody good by! (*Offering his hand to* ASTROFF) Thank you for the pleasant company I respect your trend of thought, your fascinations, your impulses, but allow an old man to add to his farewell salutations just one remark One must, ladies and gentlemen, do something One must do something! (*Bowing to all in general*) The best of everything to you

(*Goes out* MARIA VASILIEVNA *and* SONIA *follow him*)

VOINITSKY (*Kissing* ELENA S *hand fervently*) Good by Forgive me Never, we ll never meet again

ELENA (*Touched*) Good by my dear

(*She kisses his head and goes out*)

ASTROFF (*To* TELEGIN) Tell them, Waffles, to bring my horses too at the same time

TELEGIN At your service, my friend

(*Goes out Only* ASTROFF *and* VOINITSKY *remain*)

ASTROFF (*Taking his paints from the table and putting them into his suitcase*) Why aren t you going to see them off?

VOINITSKY Let them go, and I I can t I feel very low, I must busy myself quickly with something

Work work! (*He fumbles with the papers on the desk*)

(*A pause Bells are heard*)

ASTROFF They are gone The Professor is glad to go Nothing could tempt him back here

MARINA (*Entering*) They are gone

(*Sitting down in an armchair and knitting on a stocking*)

SONIA (*Enters*) They are gone (*Wiping her eyes*) God grant everything will be well with them Well Uncle Vanya let s do something

VOINITSKY To work to work

SONIA It s a long long time now we haven t sat together at this table (*Lighting a lamp on the table*) There seems to be no ink (*She takes the ink well goes to the cupboard and pours out some ink*) And I feel sad that they are gone

MARIA VASILIEVNA (*Entering slowly*) They are gone!

(*She sits down and bu ies he self in her reading*)

SONIA (*Sitting dot n at the table and turning the pages of an account book*) Up the bills first of all Uncle Vanya In our hands that s been terribly neglected They sent again today for a bill Write You write one bill I ll write another

VOINITSKY (*Writing*) "The bill to Mr

(*Both write silently*)

MARINA (*Yawning*) I m getting sleepy

ASTROFF It is quiet Pens are scratching crickets are chirping It s warm and cozy I don t feel like leaving here (*There is the sound of bells*) There they are bringing the horses That means that all there is left is for me to tell you good-by my dear friends and say good by to my table and—be off!

(*Puts the charts into the portfolio*)

MARINA And why are you fidgeting? You could sit down

ASTROFF I can t

VOINITSKY (*Writing*) And of the old debt there remains two seventy five

(*Enter* A WORKMAN)

THE WORKMAN Mikhail Lvovich, the horses are ready

ASTROFF I heard it (*Giving him the traveling medicine chest the suitcase and the portfolio*) Here, take this See that you don t crumple the portfolio

THE WORKMAN I ll see to it

(*He goes out*)

ASTROFF Well (*He starts saying good by*)

SONIA When will we see each other?

ASTROFF Not before summer very likely I doubt during the winter Obviously if anything should happen, then let me know—I will come (*Shaking hands*) Thanks for bread, for salt, for kindness in a word, for everything (*Goes to the nurse and kisses her on the head*) Good by, good by, old one

MARINA And so you will leave without tea?

ASTROFF I don t want any, Nurse

MARINA Maybe you will drink a little vodka?

ASTROFF (*Undecided*) Well, maybe

(MARINA *goes out*)

ASTROFF (*After a pause*) My side horse is lame for some reason I noticed it even yesterday when Peter led him to water

VOINITSKY Must change his shoe

ASTROFF I will have to stop by at the blacksmith's in Rojhdestvenoy There s no dodging it (*He goes to the map of Africa and looks at it*) And it must be

burning hot in this very Africa—that's something hellish

VOINITSKY Yes very likely

MARINA (*Returning with a tray on which there is a glass of vodka and a piece of bread*) Drink please

(ASTROFF *drinks the vodka*)

MARINA To your health Son (*Bowing low*) And why not a bite of bread

ASTROFF No just that And now the best of everything (*To* MARINA) Don't see me off Nurse Don't

(*He goes out* SONIA *follows him with a candle to light the way* MARINA *sits down in her arm chair*)

VOINITSKY (*Writing*) Second of February vegetable oil twenty pounds sixteenth of February again vegetable oil twenty pounds Buckwheat

(*A pause There is the sound of bells*)

MARINA He is gone

(*A pause*)

SONIA (*Returning and putting the candle on the table*) He is gone

VOINITSKY (*Adding on the abacus and writing down the sum*) That makes fifteen twenty five

(SONIA *sits down and begins writing*)

MARINA (*Yawning*) A ah our sins

(TELEGIN *enters on tiptoes sits down near the door and quietly tunes the guitar*)

VOINITSKY (*To* SONIA *stroking her hair with his hand*) My child how heavy this is on me Oh if you knew how heavy it is!

SONIA What can we do we must live! (*A pause*) We shall live Uncle Vanya We'll live through a long

long line of days, endless evenings, we'll bear patiently the trials fate sends us, we'll work for others now and in our old age without ever knowing any rest, and when our hour comes, we'll die humbly and there beside the coffin we'll say that we suffered, that we cried, that we felt bitter, and God will take pity on us and you and I, Uncle darling Uncle, shall see life bright, beautiful, fine, we shall be happy and will look back tenderly with a smile on these misfortunes we have now—and we shall rest I have faith, I believe warmly passionately (*Kneeling before him and putting her head on his hands in a tired voice*) We shall rest!

(TELEGIN *plays the guitar quietly*)

SONIA We shall rest! We shall hear the angels, we shall see the whole sky all diamonds, we shall see how all earthly evil, all our sufferings are drowned in the mercy that will fill the whole world And our life will grow peaceful, tender, sweet as a caress I believe, I do believe (*Wipes away his tears with a handkerchief*) Poor, dear Uncle Vanya you are crying (*Through her tears*) In your life you haven't known what joy was, but wait, Uncle Vanya wait We shall rest (*Embraces him*) We shall rest! (*The night watchman taps* TELEGIN *is strumming quietly* MARIA VASILIEVNA *is writing on the margins of a pamphlet* MARINA *is knitting on a stocking*)

SONIA We shall rest!

The curtain falls slowly

The Three Sisters

OLGA It's warm today We can keep the windows wide open but the birches haven't any leaves yet Father was given his brigade and left Moscow with us eleven years ago and I remember distinctly that early in May at this very time in Moscow everything is in bloom it's warm everything is bathed in sunshine That's eleven *years ago but I remember it all as if we'd left there* yesterday Oh God! I woke up this morning saw a flood of light saw the spring and my heart leapt with joy And I did long passionately to go home again

TCHEBUTYKIN The devil!

TUSENBACH Of course it's all rot

(MASHA *brooding over a book softly whistles a song*)

OLGA Don't whistle Masha How can you do that! (*A pause*) I'm at the high school every day giving lessons till evening that's why my head aches all the time and what thoughts I have might just as well belong to an old woman and be done with it These four years I've been teaching in high school I have felt my strength and youth going out of me day by day drop by drop And just one dream grows stronger and stronger

IRINA To go to Moscow Sell the house wind up everything here and to Moscow

OLGA Yes! Soon to Moscow

(TCHEBUTYKIN *and* TUSENBACH *laugh*)

IRINA Brother will be a professor very likely but all the same he won't live here The one thing that stops us is poor Masha

OLGA Masha will be coming to Moscow for the whole summer every year

(MASHA *is softly whistling a song*)

IRINA God grant it all works out! (*Looking out of the*

window) The weather is beautiful today I don t know why my heart s so light! This morning I remembered it was my saint s day and suddenly felt happy, and re membered when I was a child and Mother was still alive And such wonderful thoughts thrilled me, such thoughts!

OLGA You look radiant today lovelier than ever And Masha is lovely too Andrei would be good looking if he hadn t got so heavy, it s not becoming to him And I've grown older, a lot thinner, it must be because I get cross with the girls Now that I m free today and am here at home and my head s not aching, I feel younger than yesterday I m only twenty-eight It s all good, all God s will, but it seems to me if I had married and stayed at home the whole day long, it would have been better (*A pause*) I d have loved my husband

TUSENBACH (*To* SOLYONY) You talk such nonsense that I m tired of listening to you (*Entering the drawing room*) Forgot to tell you Today you ll receive a call from our new Battery Commander Vershinin (*Sitting down at the piano*)

OLGA Well, I ll be very glad of it

IRINA Is he old?

TUSENBACH No not very Forty or forty five at most (*Playing softly*) He seems a nice chap Not stupid, that s certain Except that he talks a lot

IRINA Is he an interesting person?

TUSENBACH Yes, quite only there is a wife, a mother in law and two girls What s more he s married for the second time He pays calls and says everywhere that he has a wife and two girls And he ll say so here The wife is sort of half crazy wears long girlish braids,

speaks only of lofty matters philosophizes and often tries to commit suicide obviously to plague the husband I'd have left such a woman long ago myself but he puts up with her and merely complains

SOLYONY (*Entering the drawing room from the dining room with* TCHEBUTYKIN) With one hand I can lift only fifty pounds but with both one hundred eighty or even two hundred pounds From this I conclude that two men are not twice as strong as one but three times even more

TCHEBUTYKIN (*Reading a newspaper as he comes in*) For falling hair two ounces of naphthalene to half a bottle of spirits Dissolve and use daily (*Writing it down in his notebook*) Let's write it down! (To SOLYONY) And so I tell you a little cork is put in a bottle and through the cork there's a glass tube Then you take a pinch of plain ordinary alum

IRINA Ivan Romanovich dear Ivan Romanovich!

TCHEBUTYKIN What is it my child my sweet?

IRINA Tell me why am I so happy today? It's just as if I were going full sail with the wide blue sky above me and great white birds floating there Why is that? Why?

TCHEBUTYKIN (*Kissing both her hands tenderly*) My white bird

IRINA This morning when I awoke and got up and bathed it seemed all at once that everything in this world was clear to me and I knew how one must live Dear Ivan Romanovich I know everything A man must do something he must toil by the sweat of his brow no matter who he is and all the meaning and aim of his life his happiness his ecstasies must lie in

this only How good it is to be a workman who gets up at dawn and breaks stones in the street, or a shepherd, or a schoolmaster who teaches children, or an engineer on a railroad My God! Next to being a man it s better to be an ox, it s better to be a common horse, if only you do some work, than be a young woman who wakes up at twelve o clock, has coffee in bed, and then dresses for two hours Oh, but that s dreadful! Just as on hot days one may have a craving for water, I have a craving for work And if I don t get up early and go to work give me up as a friend, Ivan Romanovich

TCHEBUTYKIN (*Tenderly*) I ll give you up, I ll give you up—

OLGA Father trained us to get up at seven Now Irina wakes at seven and lies there till at least nine thinking And looking so serious! (*Laughing*)

IRINA You are used to thinking of me as a little girl so it seems strange to you when I look serious I m twenty years old

TUSENBACH Longing for work Oh my God, how I understand that! I have never worked in my life I was born in Petersburg, cold, idle Petersburg in a family that never knew any sort of work or worry I remember when I came home from military school the footman pulled off my boots while I fidgeted and my mother looked adoringly at me, and was surprised when the others didn t look at me the same way I was shielded from work Though I doubt if they succeeded in shielding me, I doubt it! The time has come, something tremendous is hovering over us all, a vast healing storm is gathering, it s coming it s near already, and will soon clear our society of the laziness the indifference,

the prejudice against work the rotten boredom I ll work and in *another* twenty five or *thirty* years every *man* will be working Every one!

TCHEBUTYKIN I shan t work

TUSENBACH You don t count

SOLONY Twenty five years from now you won t even be on earth thank God! In two or three years you ll die of distemper or I ll forget myself and put a bullet in your forehead *my angel* (*Taking a phial of perfume from his pocket and sprinkling his chest and hands*)

TCHEBUTYKIN (*Laughing*) And I really never did any thing Since I left the University *I haven t* lifted a finger I ve not read a single book even but just read the newspapers (*Taking another newspaper out of his pocket*) Listen—I know from the newspapers that there was let s say a *Dobrolyubov* but what he wrote about I don t know God only knows (*A knock is heard on the floor from the floor below*) Listen They are calling me from downstairs somebody has come to see me I ll be back right away Wait (*He leaves hurriedly combing out his beard as he goes*)

IRINA He s up to something

TUSENBACH Yes He left with a triumphant face obviously he will now bring you a present

IRINA That s too bad

OLGA Yes it s awful He always does something childish

MASHA By the curved seashore a green oak a golden chain upon that oak a golden chain upon that oak (*Getting up and singing softly*)

OLGA You are not very merry today Masha (MASHA *sings as she puts on her hat*)

OLGA Where to?

MASHA Home

IRINA That s strange

TUSENBACH To leave a saint s day party!

MASHA It s all the same I ll come this evening Good by, my pretty (*Kissing* IRINA) I wish you once again good health and happiness When father was alive thirty or forty officers used to come to our birth day parties, it was good and noisy but nowadays there s only a man and a half and it s quiet as the desert I m going I ve got the blues today, I feel depressed so don t listen to me (*Laughing through her tears*) We ll talk later on, so good by now, my dear I ll go somewhere or other

IRINA (*Vexed*) Oh you are such a

OLGA (*Tearfully*) I understand you, Masha

SOLYONY If a man philosophizes it will be philosophy or sophistry, but if a woman philosophizes or two women it will be—like cracking your fingers

MASHA What are you trying to say, you terribly dread ful man?

SOLYONY Nothing Quick as a flash, the bear made a dash (*A pause*)

MASHA (*To* OLGA *crossly*) Don t howl

(ANFISA *enters and after her* FERAPONT *with a cake*)

ANFISA Here little Father Come in, your feet are clean (*To* IRINA) From the District Board, from Mikhail Ivanovich Protopopov a cake

IRINA Thank you Thank him for me (*Taking the cake*)

FERAPONT How s that?

IRINA (*Louder*) Thank him for me

OLGA Nursey give him some pie Go on Ferapont. They ll give you some pie

FERAPONT How s that?

ANFISA Come on little Father Ferapont Spiridonich Come on (*Goes out with* FERAPONT)

MASHA I don t like Protopopov that Mikhail Potopich or Ivanovich He should not be invited

IRINA I didn t do the inviting

MASHA That s fine!

(TCHEBUTYKIN *enters behind him an* ORDERLY *with a silver samovar there is a hum of astonishment and displeasure*)

OLGA (*Covering her face with her hands*) A samovar! This is terrible (*Going to the table in the dining room*)

IRINA Darling Ivan Romanovich what are you doing?

TUSENBACH (*Laughing*) I told you so

MASHA Ivan Romanovich you re simply shameless

TCHEBUTYKIN My darlings my good little ones you are all I have to me you are everything that s most precious in the world I ll soon be sixty I m an old man a lonely worthless old man There is nothing good about me but this love for you and if it weren t for you I d long ago have stopped living in this world (*To* IRINA) My dear my little child I have known you since the day you were born I carried you in my arms I loved your dear mother

IRINA But why such expensive presents!

TCHEBUTYKIN (*Through his tears angrily*) Expensive presents! Why you re completely (*To the* ORDERLY) Carry the samovar in there (*Mimicking*) Expensive presents

(*The* ORDERLY *carries the samovar into the dining room*)

ANFISA (*Passing through the drawing room*) My dears, there's a colonel, a stranger He's already taken off his overcoat, children, and is coming in here Irinushka, now be a nice, polite girl (*As she goes out*) And it was time for lunch long ago Lord have mercy!

TUSENBACH It must be Vershinin

(VERSHININ *enters*)

TUSENBACH Lieutenant Colonel Vershinin!

VERSHININ (*To* MASHA *and* IRINA) I have the honor to introduce myself Vershinin I'm very, very glad that at last I am in your house How you've grown! Ay! Ay!

IRINA Please sit down We are delighted

VERSHININ (*Gaily*) How glad I am! How glad I am! But you are three sisters I remember—three girls Your faces I don't remember now, but your father, Colonel Prozoroff, had three little girls I remember that perfectly I saw them with my own eyes How time does pass! Oh, oh, how time does pass!

TUSENBUCH Alexander Ignatievich is from Moscow

IRINA From Moscow You are from Moscow?

VERSHININ Yes, from there Your father was a battery commander there, and I was an officer in the same brigade (*To* MASHA) It seems to me now I do remember your face rather

MASHA And you I—No!

IRINA Olya! Olya! (*Calling into the dining room*) Olya! Come here (OLGA *comes in from the dining room*) Lieutenant Colonel Vershinin, it turns out, is from Moscow

VERSHININ You must be Olga Sergeevna the eldest And you Maria And you Irina—the youngest.

OLGA You are from Moscow?

VERSHININ Yes I was at school in Moscow and began my service in Moscow served there a long time was finally assigned a battery here—moved here as you see I don t remember you as a matter of fact but only that you were three sisters Your father is fresh in my memory I can close my eyes now and see him as plain as life I used to pay you calls in Moscow

OLGA I thought I remembered everybody and look all of a sudden

VERSHININ My name is Alexander Ignatievich

IRINA Alexander Ignatievich you are from Moscow What a surprise!

OLGA We are going to move there you know

IRINA We think by autumn we ll be there It s our native town we were born there In Old Basmanny Street

(They both laugh delightedly)

MASHA Unexpectedly we see a fellow countryman (*Vivaciously*) Now I remember! Do you remember Olya, at our house they used to say The lovesick major You were a lieutenant then and in love with someone and they all teased you for some reason as the lovesick major

VERSHININ (*Laughing*) That s right! That s right! The lovesick major That was it!

MASHA But you had only a mustache then Oh how much older you look! (*Tearfully*) How much older you look!

VERSHININ Yes, when thev called me the lovesick major, I was still young, I was in love Not so now

OLGA But you still haven t a single gray hair You look older, but you are still not old

VERSHININ For all that, I m in my forty third year Is it long since you left Moscow?

IRINA Eleven years But why are you crying Masha, you little fool? (*Through her tears*) I m starting to cry too

MASHA I m all right And in what street did you live?

VERSHININ In Old Basmanny

OLGA And we lived there, too

VERSHININ At one time I lived in Nemetzky Street I used to walk from Nemetzky Street to the Red Bar racks There s a sullen looking bridge on the way, and under the bridge you hear the water roaring A lonely man feels sick at heart there (*A pause*) But here, what a broad, what a superb river! A wonderful river!

OLGA Yes, except that it s cold It s cold here and there are mosquitoes

VERSHININ How can you! You have such a fine, healthy Russian climate here Woods river and birches too Sweet, modest birches, of all trees I love them best It s good to live here And yet, strangely enough the railway station is thirteen miles away And nobody knows why that is

SOLYONY But I know why it is (*Everyone looks at him*) Because if the station were right here then twere not off there, and if it is off there, then it s not right here (*An awkward silence*)

TUSENBACH You re a joker, Vasili Vasilievich

OLGA Now I remember you too I remember

VERSHININ I knew your mother

TCHEBUTYKIN She was a lovely woman bless her soul!

IRINA Mother is buried in Moscow

OLGA In the Novo Devichy

MASHA Imagine I m already beginning to forget her face Just as we won t be remembered either They ll forget us

VERSHININ Yes They ll forget us Such is our fate it can t be helped What seems to us serious significant highly important—the time will come when it will be forgotten or seem unimportant (*A pause*) And it s an interesting thing we can t possibly tell now just what will be considered great or important and what pitiful ridiculous Didn t the discoveries of Copernicus or let s say Columbus seem at first unnecessary ridiculous and some shallow nonsense written by a fool seem to be the truth? And it may be that our present life to which we are so reconciled will seem very strange some day uncomfortable stupid not pure enough perhaps even sinful

TUSENBACH Who knows? Perhaps our life will be called superior and remembered with respect Nowadays there are no tortures no executions no invasions though for all that there s so much unhappiness!

SOLYONY (*In a high pitched voice*) Chick chick chick
Don t feed the Baron grain just let him philosophize

TUSENBACH Vasili Vasilievich I beg you leave me alone (*Sits at another place*) After all it s tiresome

SOLYONY (*In a high pitched voice*) Chick chick chick

TUSENBACH (*To* VERSHININ) The unhappiness we see

now, however, though there is still so much of it even now—bespeaks a certain moral regeneration that has already reached society

VERSHININ Yes, yes, of course

TCHEBUTYKIN You just said, Baron, that they will call our present life superior, but all the same, people are small (*Standing up*) Look how small I am It would only be to console me if anybody called my life a superior, understandable thing

(*Behind the scenes a violin plays*)

MASHA It s Andrei playing our brother

IRINA He is the learned member of the family It looks as if he d be a professor Father was a military man, but his son chose for himself a learned career

MASHA According to Father s wish

OLGA Today we teased him to death It seems he s a bit in love

IRINA With a local girl She ll be with us today, there s every chance of it

MASHA Oh, how she dresses! Not merely ugly and out of style but simply pitiful Some sort of strange, loud, yellowish skirt with a vulgar fringe and a red blouse And her cheeks are so scrubbed, scrubbed! Andrei isn t in love—I won t admit it, after all he has taste, he s simply teasing us, he s fooling I heard yesterday that she is marrying Protopopov, the Chairman of the Board And that s fine—(*At the side door*) Andrei, come here! Darling, just for a minute!

(ANDREI *enters*)

OLGA This is my brother, Andrei Sergeevich

VERSHININ Vershinin

ANDREI Prozoroff (*He wipes his perspiring face*) You are our new Battery Commander?

OLGA Can you imagine Alexander Ignatievich is from Moscow

ANDREI Yes? Well I congratulate you now my little sisters won t give you any peace

VERSHININ I have already had time to tire your sisters out

IRINA Look at the frame Andrei gave me today! (*Showing the frame*) He made it himself

VERSHININ (*Looking at the frame and not knowing what to say*) Yes A thing

IRINA And the frame that s over the piano there he made that too

(ANDREI *waves his hand as if disparagingly and moves away*)

OLGA He is not only our learned one he also plays the violin and he sa s various things out of wood In sum he has a hand for anything Andrei don t go away! That s the way he does—he s always leaving us Come here!

(MASHA *and* IRINA *laughing take him by the arms and lead him back*)

MASHA Come! Come!

ANDREI Let me alone please

MASHA How funny he is! Alexander Ignatievich used to be called the lovesick major and he didn t get a b t angry

VERSHININ Not a bit

MASHA And I want to call you the lovesick viol nist!

IRINA Or the lovesick professor!

OLGA He s in love! Andrusha s in love!

IRINA (*Applaud ng*) Bravo bravo! *B t!* Andrushka is in love!

TCHEBUTYKIN (*Comes up behind* ANDREI *and puts bo h*

arms around his waist) For love alone did Nature put us in this world (*Laughing All the while he is holding a newspaper*)

ANDREI Well, that s enough, that s enough (*Wiping his face*) I haven t slept all night and now I m not myself, as they say Till four o clock I read, then lay down, but nothing happened I thought of this and of that, and then, of course, at the crack of dawn here the sun swarms into my bedroom During the summer while I am here, I want to translate a certain book from English

VERSHININ And do you read English?

ANDREI Yes Our father—bless his soul!—loaded us down with education It s ridiculous and stupid but all the same I must admit that in a year after his death I began to fill out and get fat like this, as if my body were freed from the load Thanks to Father my sisters and I know the French German and English languages and Irina knows Italian too But at what a cost!

MASHA In this town, to know three languages is an unnecessary luxury It isn t even a luxury, it s a sort of unnecessary appendage like a sixth finger We know a lot that s useless

VERSHININ There we have it! (*Laughing*) You know a lot that is useless! It seems to me there s not and can t be a town so boring and dull that a clever educated person would be unnecessary in it Let s suppose that among the hundred thousand inhabitants of this town, which evidently is backward and crude there are only three such people as you It is obvious that you cannot triumph over the dark masses that surround you in the course of your life you ll have to

Colonel Read it sometime when you are bored

VERSHININ Thank you (*He is about to leave*) I am extremely glad I made your acquaintance

OLGA You are leaving? No no!

IRINA Stay and lunch with us Please

OLGA I beg you!

VERSHININ (*Bowing*) It seems I ve stumbled on to a saint s day party Forgive me I didn t know didn t congratulate you (*Goes with* OLGA *to the dining room*)

KULYGIN Today is Sunday gentlemen a day of rest let us rest let us be gay each one according to his age and position The rugs should be taken up for the summer and stored till winter Persian powder or naphthalene The Romans were healthy because they knew how to work knew how to re t they had *mens sana in corpore sano* Their life flowed on according to fixed forms Our director says the principal thing in every life is its form That which loses its form ends itself—and it s the same with our everyday existence (*Takes* IASHA *by the waist laughing*) Masha loves me My wife loves me. And the window curtains too together with the rugs Today I am gay in a splendid mood Masha at four o clock today we are to be at the director s There s a walk being arranged for the teachers and their families

MASHA I am not go ng

KULYGIN (*Agg ieved*) Dear Masha why?

MASHA Later on about that (*Angrily*) Oh very well I ll go but just leave me alone please (*Walks away*)

KULYGIN And then we ll spend the evening at the director s In spite of his sickly state of health, this man tries above all else to be sociable A superior, bright personality A magnificent man Yesterday, after the teacher s conference, he says to me I am tired, Fyodor Ilyich I am tired! (*Looks at the clock on the wall then at his watch*) Your clock is seven minutes fast Yes, he says, I am tired!

(*Behind the scene a violin is playing*)

OLGA Ladies and gentlemen, come to lunch, please! There s a meat pie

KULYGIN Ah, my dear Olga, my dear! Yesterday I worked from early morning till eleven o clock in the evening got tired and today I feel happy (*Goes into the dining room and up to the table*)

TCHEBUTYKIN (*Puts the newspaper in his pocket combs his beard*) A meat pie? Splendid!

MASHA (*To* TCHEBUTYKIN *sternly*) Only, look out nothing to drink today Do you hear? Drinking s bad for you

TCHEBUTYKIN Oh go on! I m past all that It is two years I ve not been on a drunk (*Impatiently*) Ah old girl, isn t it all the same?

MASHA All the same, don t you dare drink Don t you dare (*Angrily but so that her husband doesn t hear*) The Devil take it, to be bored again all evening long at the director s

TUSENBACH I wouldn t go if I were in your place It s very simple

TCHEBUTYKIN Don t go, dearie

MASHA Yes don t go This curst, unbearable life (*Going to the dining room*)

TCHEBUTYKIN (*Going with her*) Now!

SOLYONY (*Going to the dining room*) Chick chick chick

TUSENBACH That's enough Vasili Vasilievich Drop it!

SOLYONY Chick chick chick

KULYGIN (*Gaily*) Your health Colonel! I am a pedagogue and here in this house I'm one of the family Masha's husband She is kind very kind

VERSHININ I'll have some of that dark vodka (*Drinking*) Your health! (*To* OLGA) I feel so good in your house!

(*In the drawing room only* IRINA *and* TUSENBACH *are left*)

IRINA Masha is in a bad humor today She got married at eighteen when he seemed to her the most intelligent of men But now it's not the same He's the kindest but not the most intelligent

OLGA (*Impatiently*) Andrei do come after all!

ANDREI (*Behind the scenes*) This minute (*Enters and goes to the table*)

TUSENBACH What are you thinking about?

IRINA This I dislike and I'm afraid of that Solyony of yours He talks nothing but nonsense

TUSENBACH He is a strange person I am both sorry for him and annoyed but more sorry It seems to me he's shy When the two of us are alone he's very clever and gentle sometimes but in company he is a crude fellow a bully Don't go away let them get settled at the table Let me be near you awhile What are you thinking about? (*A pause*) You are twenty I am not yet thirty How many years there are left for us ahead a long long row of days full of my love for you

IRINA Nikolai Lvovich, don't talk to me of love

TUSENBACH (*Not listening*) I have a passionate thirst for life, struggle, work, and that thirst is mingled in my soul with love for you, Irina And it s as though it were by some design that you are beautiful and life seems beautiful to me because of you What are you thinking about?

IRINA You say life is beautiful Yes, but what if it only seems so! With us three sisters, life hasn t yet been beautiful, it has stifled us as weeds do grass I m letting my tears fall I shouldn t do that (*Quickly wiping her face smiling*) We must do some thing, must work That's why we are not happy and look at life so gloomily—we don t know anything about working We come of people who despised work

(NATALIA IVANOVNA *enters she has a pink dress with a green belt*)

NATASHA Look, they are already sitting down to lunch I m late (*She steals a glance at herself in the mirror and tidies herself up*) My hair seems to be all right (*Seeing* IRINA) Dear Irina Sergeevna, I congratulate you! (*Kissing her vigorously and long*) You have lots of guests, I really feel shy How do you do, Baron!

OLGA (*Entering the living room*) Well, and here is Natalia Ivanovna Good day, my dear (*They kiss*)

NATASHA Congratulations on the saint s day You have so much company, I feel awfully that

OLGA Never mind it s just the family (*In an under tone alarmed*) You have on a green belt! My dear, that s not right!

NATASHA Is it a sign of something?

OLGA No it just doesn t match and somehow it looks odd—

NATASHA (*In a tearful toice*) Yes? But it s not really green it s more of a neutral color (*Follows* OLGA *into the dining room*)

(*In the dining room they are sitting down to lunch there is not a soul in the living room*)

KULYGIN I wish you Irina a good fiance! It s time you married

TCHEBUTYKIN Natalia Ivanovna I wish you a fiancé too

KULYGIN Natalia Ivanovna already has a fiance

MASHA (*Strikes her plate with her fork*) I ll take a little drink! What the life is all roses I ll risk it

KULYGIN Your conduct gets C minus

VERSHININ And the liqueur tastes good What s it made of?

SOLYONY Cockroaches

IRINA (*In a tearful voice*) Phew! How disgusting!

OLGA For supper there will be roast turkey and apple pie Thank the Lord I ll be at home all day and in the evening—at home Everybody must come this evening

VERSHININ Allow me too to come this evening!

IRINA Please do

NATASHA They are very informal

TCHEBUTYKIN For love alone did Nature put us in this world (*Laughing*)

ANDREI (*Angrily*) Stop it everybody! Aren t you tired of it?

(FEDOTIK *and* RODAY *enter with a big basket of flowers*)

FEDOTIK But say, they are already lunching

RODAY (*Talking loud and affectedly*) Lunching? Yes, already lunching

FEDOTIK Wait a minute! (*Taking a snapshot*) One! Wait just one more (*Taking another snapshot*) Two! Now, ready! (*They pick up the basket and go to the dining room where they are greeted noisily*)

RODAY (*In a loud voice*) Congratulations, I wish you everything, everything! The weather today is charming perfectly magnificent Today, all morning long, I was walking with the high school boys I teach gymnastics at the high school

FEDOTIK You may move, Irina Sergeevna, you may! (*Taking a snapshot*) You look well today (*Getting a top out of his pocket*) By the way, see this top It has an amazing sound

IRINA How delightful!

MASHA By the curved seashore a green oak, a golden chain upon that oak A golden chain upon that oak (*Tearfully*) Now, why do I say that? This phrase has stuck in my mind ever since morning

KULYGIN Thirteen at the table!

RODAY (*In a loud voice*) Could it really be ladies and gentlemen, that you attach importance to these superstitions?

(*Laughing*)

KULYGIN Thirteen at the table shows that there are lovers here It s not you, Ivan Romanovich by any chance? (*Laughter*)

TCHEBUTYKIN I am an old sinner but why Natalia Ivanovna should be embarrassed I simply can t understand

(*Loud laughter* NATASHA *runs out from the a*

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TCHEBUTYKIN I am an old sinner, but why Natalia Ivanovna should be embarrassed I simply can't understand

(*Loud laughter*, NATASHA *runs out from the dining*

room into the living room ANDREI *following her*)

ANDREI Come on don t pay any attention to them! Wait Stop I beg you

NATASHA I m ashamed I don t know what it s all about and they are making fun of me It was bad manners for me to leave the table just now but I can t I can t (*Covers her face with her hands*)

ANDREI My dear I beg you I entreat you don t be upset I assure you they are only joking they have kind hearts My darling my beautiful they all are gentle kind hearted people and they love me and you Come over here to the window they can t see us here

(*He glances around*)

NATASHA I am so unused to being in society!

ANDREI Ah youth wonderful beautiful youth! My dear my darling don t be so upset! Believe me, believe I feel so happy my soul is full of love, ecstasy Oh they can t see us! They can t see! Why why I fell in love with you when I fell in love My dear darling pure one be my wife! I love you love as nobody ever (*A kiss*)

(*The* TWO OFFICERS *enter and seeing the pair kissing stop in astonishment*)

Curtain

ACT TWO

The setting is the same as in Act One It is eight o clock in the evening Offstage faintly we hear an accordion playing in the street There are no lights

NATALIA IVANOVNA *enters in a dressing gown with a candle she comes in and stops at the door that leads into* ANDREI S *room*

NATASHA Andrusha, what are you doing? Reading? It's nothing, I just (*Goes and opens another door and after looking in closes it*) If there s a light

ANDREI (*Enters with a book in his hand*) You what, Natasha?

NATASHA Looking to see if there s a light Now it's Carnival week the servants are beside themselves, we have to look and look, so that nothing goes wrong Last night at midnight, I passed through the dining room, and a candle was burning there Who lighted it I couldn t find out (*Putting down her candle*) What time is it?

ANDREI (*Looking at his watch*) It s a quarter past eight

NATASHA And Olga and Irina not in yet They haven t come in Always working, poor girls! Olga at the Teachers Council, Irina at the telegraph office (*Sighing*) This morning I say to your sister Spare yourself, I say, Irina darling But she won t listen Quarter past eight, you say? I am anxious for fear, our Bobik is not at all well Why is he so cold? Yesterday he had fever, and today he is cold all over I am so anxious!

ANDREI It s nothing, Natasha The boy is all right

NATASHA Still it s better to put him on a diet I m anxious And tonight, around ten o clock, they said, the maskers will be here, it would be better if they didn t come Andrusha

ANDREI Really I don t know But they were invited

NATASHA This morning the little fellow wakes up and looks at me and all at once he smiles so he knew me Bobik I say good morning! Good morning dear! And he laughs Children understand they understand perfectly So Andrusha I ll tell them not to let the maskers in

ANDREI (*Indecisively*) But that s for my sisters to say they are mistresses here

NATASHA And they too I ll tell them They are kind (*Going*) For supper I ordered some buttermilk The doctor says you re to have nothing but buttermilk or you ll never get any thinner (*Stopping*) Bobik is cold I m afraid he may be cold in that room of his We ought to—at least till warm weather comes —put him in a different room For instance Irina s room is just right for a child it s dry and sunny too all day long I must tell her that For a while at least she could be in the same room with Olga She s not at home during the day anyhow she only spends the night (*A pause*) Andrushanchik why don t you say something?

ANDREI I was just thinking— Besides there s nothing to talk about.

NATASHA Yes There s something I wanted to tell you Oh yes Ferapont has just come from the District Board he s asking for you

ANDREI (*Yawning*) Call him in

(*NATASHA goes out ANDREI bending over to the candle which she has forgotten to take along reads his book FERAPONT enters he is in a shabby old coat with the collar turned up a scarf over his ears*)

ANDREI Good evening, my good soul What have you got to say?

FERAPONT The Chairman has sent you a book and a paper of some kind Here (*He gives the book and an envelope to* ANDREI)

ANDREI Thanks Good! But why did you come so late? It s after eight now?

FERAPONT How s that?

ANDREI (*Louder*) I say you came late, it s now after eight

FERAPONT Exactly I got here when it was still light but they all wouldn t let me in The master, they said, is busy Well, it s like this You re busy, very busy I have nowhere to hurry to (*Thinking that* ANDREI *is asking him something*) How s that?

ANDREI Nothing (*Examining the book*) Tomorrow is Friday, we haven t any school but all the same I ll come, just to be doing something It s tiresome at home (*A pause*) Dear Grandpa, how strangely it changes, how life deceives one! Today, out of boredom, out of nothing else to do, I picked up this book here—old university lectures, and I felt like laughing

My God! I m the secretary of the District Board, that board where Protopopov presides, I am the secretary and the very most I can hope for—is to be a member of the District Board! Me, a member of the local district board, I who dream every night that I m a professor in Moscow University, a famous scholar whom this Russian land is proud of!

FERAPONT I wouldn t know Don t hear well

ANDREI If you could hear well, I might not have talked to you I must talk to somebody, but my wife doesn t understand me and I am afraid of my sisters some

how I'm afraid they will laugh at me make m ashamed I don t drink don t like bars but with what pleasure I could be sitting right now in Moscow at Testoff's or in the Bolshoy Moscoffsky my dear fellow

FERAPONT And in Moscow so a contractor was saying the other day at the District Board some merchants were eating bliny one of them it seems ate forty blinies and died It was either forty or fifty I wouldn t remember

ANDREI You sit in Moscow in a huge room at a restaurant you don t know anybody and nobody knows you but at the same time you don t feel like a stranger And here you know everybody and everybody knows you but you are a stranger a stranger A stranger and lonely

FERAPONT How s that? (*A pause*) And the same contractor was saying—maybe he was just lying—that a rope is stretched all the way across Moscow

ANDREI What for?

FERAPONT I wouldn t know The contractor said so

ANDREI Fiddlesticks (*Reading*) Were you ever in Moscow?

FERAPONT (*After a pause*) Never was God didn t grant me that (*A pause*) Shall I go?

ANDREI You may go Good by (FERAPONT *goes out*) Good by (*Reading*) Come tomorrow morning and get these papers Go (*A pause*) He s gone (*A bell rings*) Yes it s a business— (*St c hing a d going slowly into his room*)

(*Behind the scenes a nurse is singing rocking a child* MASHA *and* VERSHININ *enter conversing In*

the dining room one of the maids is lighting a lamp and the candles)

MASHA I don t know (*A pause*) I don t know Of course habit means a lot For example after Father s death it took us a long time to get used to not having orderlies in the house But even apart from habit I think, common justice makes me say it—in other places it may not be so, but in our town the most de cent, the most honorable and well brought up people —are the military

VERSHININ I m thirsty I d drink some tea

MASHA (*Glancing at the clock*) It will soon be here They married me off when I was eighteen years old and I was afraid of my husband because he was a teacher, and that was when I had barely finished my courses He seemed to me terribly learned then clever and important But now it s not the same, un fortunately

VERSHININ So—yes

MASHA I am not talking about my husband I m used to him, but among the civilians generally there are so many people who are crude and unfriendly and haven t any manners Rudeness upsets me and of fends me, I suffer when I see that a man is not fine enough gentle enough, polite When I happen to be among the teachers, my husband s colleagues, I m simply miserable

VERSHININ Yes But it seems to me it s all the same whether they are civilian or military, they are equally uninteresting, at any rate in this town they are It s all the same! If you listen to one of the local intelligentsia—civilian or military—what you hear is

that he s worn out with his wife worn out with his home worn out with his estate worn out with his horses A Russian is quite supremely given to lofty ways in thought but will you tell me why it is that in life he strikes so low? Why?

MASHA Why?

VERSHININ Why is he worn out with his children worn out with his wife? And why are the wife and the children worn out with him?

MASHA You are not in a very good humor today

VERSHININ Perhaps I haven t had any dinner today nothing to eat since morning One of my daughters is not very well and when my girls are ailing I am seized with anxiety and my conscience torments me for their having such a mother Oh if you d seen her today! What a miserable wretch! We began to quarrel at seven o clock in the morning and at nine I slammed the door and went out (*A pause*) I never speak of it and strangely enough I complain just to you (*Kissing he hand*) Don t be angry with me But for you alone I d not have anybody—nobody

(*A pause*)

MASHA What a noise in the stove! At home just before Father died it was howling in the chimney There just like that!

VERSHININ Are you superstitious?

MASHA Yes

VERSHININ That s strange (*Kissing her hand*) You are a magnificent wonderful woman Magnificent won derful! It is dark here but I see the sparkle of your eyes

MASHA (*Mo i g to another chai*) It s lighter here

VERSHININ I love, love, love Love your eyes, your gestures, I see them in my dreams Magnificent, wonderful woman!

MASHA (*Laughing quietly*) When you talk to me like that, for some reason or other, I laugh, though I m frightened Don t do it again, I beg you (*In a low voice*) But talk, though, it s all the same to me (*Covering her face with her hands*) It s all the same to me They re coming here—talk about something else

(IRINA *and* TUSENBACH *enter from the dining room*)

TUSENBACH I have a triple name I am called Tusenbach—Krone—Altschauer—but I am Russian Orthodox, like you There s very little German left in me, perhaps only this patience and stubbornness that I bore you with I see you home every evening

IRINA I m so tired!

TUSENBACH And every day I ll come to the telegraph office and see you home, I ll do that for ten, twenty, years for as long as you don t drive me away (*Seeing* MASHA *and* VERSHININN *delightedly*) It s you? Good evening

IRINA Here I am home at last (*To* MASHA) Just now a lady came, telegraphed her brother in Saratov that her son died today and couldn t remember the address at all So she sent it without the address, simply to Saratov She was crying And I was rude to her for no reason whatever I haven t got time I said Twas so silly! Are the maskers coming tonight?

MASHA Yes

IRINA (*She sits down in an armchair*) I must rest I m tired

TUSENBACH (*Smiling*) When you come back from your office, you seem so young unhappy

(*A pause*)

IRINA I m tired No I don t like the telegraphing I don t like it.

MASHA You are thinner (*She begins to whistle*) And look younger and your face begins to look like a little boy s

TUSENBACH That s from her hair

IRINA I must try and find another position this one is not for me What I wanted so what I dreamed of that s exactly what s not there Work without poetry without thoughts (*A knock on the floor*) The doctor is knocking (*To* TUSENBACH) Knock back dear I can t I m tired

(TUSENBACH *knocks on the floor*)

IRINA He ll come this minute Something or other will have to be done about it The doctor and our Andrei were at the club yesterday and lost again They say Andrei lost two hundred roubles

MASHA (*Indifferently*) So what s there to do now?

IRINA Two weeks ago he lost in December he lost If he d lose everything soon perhaps we d go away from this town Oh my Lord God I dream of Moscow every night I am like someone completely possessed (*Laughing*) We are moving there in June and from now to June leaves still February March April May Almost half a year!

MASHA The only thing is Natasha mustn t some way or other hear of his losses

IRINA It s all one to her I imagine

(TCHEBUTYKIN *who has just got out of bed—he has been resting after dinner—enters the dining room*

combing his beard then sits down at the table and takes a newspaper from his pocket)

MASHA There he comes Has he paid anything on his apartment?

IRINA (*Laughing*) No Not a kopeck for eight months He s forgotten it evidently

MASHA (*Laughing*) How importantly he sits!

(*Everybody laughs a pause*)

IRINA Why are you so quiet, Alexander Ignatievich?

VERSHININ I don t know What I d like is some tea Half my life for a glass of tea! I ve eaten nothing since morning

TCHEBUTYKIN Irina Sergeevna!

IRINA What do you want?

TCHEBUTYKIN Please come here *Venez ici!* (IRINA *goes and sits down at the table*) I can t do without you

(IRINA *lays out the cards for patience*)

VERSHININ Well? If they are not giving us any tea, let s at least philosophize

TUSENBACH Yes, let s What about?

VERSHININ What about? Let s dream for example, of the life that will come after us in two or three hundred years

TUSENBACH Well? After us they will fly in balloons, the style of coats will change, they will discover the sixth sense perhaps, and develop it, but life will remain quite the same, a difficult life, mysterious and happy And after a thousand years, man will be sighing the same Ah, how hard it is to live! and meanwhile, exactly the same as now, he will be afraid of death and not want to die

VERSHININ (*After a moment s thought*) How shall I

put it? It seems to me everything on earth must change little by little and is already changing before our very eyes In two or three hundred eventually a thousand years—it s not a matter of time—a new happy life will come We won t share in that life of course but we are living for it now working well—suffering we are creating it—and in that alone lies the purpose of our being and if you like our happiness

(MASHA *laughs softly*)

TUSENBACH What are you laughing at?

MASHA *I don t know All day today I ve been laughing ever since morning*

VERSHININ I was graduated from the same school you were but was not at the academy I read a great deal but don t know how to choose books and read perhaps not at all what I should and meanwhile the longer I live the more I want to know My hair is turning gray I m almost an old man now but I know very little oh how very little! And yet it does seem to me that what s most important and real I do know know solidly And I d so like to prove to you that there s no happiness there should not be and there won t be for us We should only work and work and happiness—that s the lot of our remote descendants (*A pause*) Not I but at least the descendants of my descendants

(FEDOTIK *and* RODAY *appea in the d ning room they sit down and sing softly strumming a gu tar*)

TUSENBACH According to you we are not even to dream of happiness! But what if I m happy?

VERSHININ No

TUSENBACH (*Throwing up his hands and laughing*) Obviously we don t understand each other Well, how can I convince you?

(MASHA *laughs softly*)

TUSENBACH (*Holding up a finger to her*) Laugh! (*To* VERSHININ) Not only in two or three hundred but in a million years even, life will be just the same as it was, it doesn t change, it stays constant, following its own laws, which are none of our affair, or which, at least you will never know Birds of passage, cranes, for example, fly and fly, and no matter what thoughts, great or small, stray through their heads they will fly just the same and not know why and where They fly and will fly, no matter what philosophers spring up among them, and they may philosophize as much as they like so long as they fly

MASHA Just the same, has it meaning?

TUSENBACH Meaning Look, it s snowing What meaning has that?

(*A pause*)

MASHA It seems to me a man must be a believer or must seek some belief, otherwise his life is empty, empty To live and not know why the cranes fly, why children are born, why there are stars in the sky Either he knows what he s living for or it s all nonsense, waste

VERSHININ Yet it s a shame youth is gone

MASHA Gogol says It is boring to live in this world, gentlemen

TUSENBACH And I say it is difficult to argue with you, gentlemen! Why you completely

TCHEBUTYKIN (*Reading a newspaper*) Balzac was married in Berdichev (IRINA *sings softly*) Really I ll

put that in my book (*Writing*) Balzac was married in Berdichev (*Reading his newspaper*)

IRINA (*As she lays out cards for patience musing*) Balzac was married in Berdichev

TUSENBACH The die is cast You know Maria Sergeevna I have tendered my resignation

MASHA So I heard And I don t see anything good about that I don t like civilians

TUSENBACH Just the same (*Getting up*) I m not handsome what sort of military man am I? Well well but all the same however I shall work For just one day in my life work so that I come home in the evening drop exhausted into bed and fall asleep right off (*Going into the dining room*) Workmen must sleep soundly!

FEDOTIK (*To* IRINA) I bought you some crayons on Moscoffsky Street at Pyjokoff s and this penknife

IRINA You are used to treating me as if I were little but I m grown up now (*She takes the crayons and the penknife gaily*) How delightful!

FEDOTIK And I bought a knife for myself Look here a blade and another blade a third this to pick the ears these small scissors this to clean the nails

RODAY (*Talking very loud*) Doctor what s your age?

TCHEBUTYKIN Me? Thirty two

(*Laughter*)

FEDOTIK I ll now show you another game of patience (*Laying out cards fo patience*)

(*The samovar is brought* ANFISA *is at the samovar a little later* NATASHA *also comes in and hovers near the table* SOLONY *enters and after greetings sits down at the table*)

VERSHININ But what a wind!

MASHA Yes I'm tired of winter I've already forgotten what summer is like

IRINA It's coming out right, the patience, I see We shall be in Moscow

FEDOTIK No, it's not coming out right Look, the eight falls on the two of spades (*Laughing*) So you will not be in Moscow

TCHEBUTYKIN (*Reading his newspaper*) Tsitsikar Smallpox is raging here

ANFISA (*Approaching* MASHA) Masha, have some tea, little one (*To* VERSHININ) If you please, Your Excellency Excuse me, dear sir, your name, your family name, I've forgotten

MASHA Bring it here, Nurse I'm not going there

IRINA Nurse!

ANFISA I'm coming!

NATASHA (*To* SOLYONY) Bobik understands beautifully Good morning I say Bobik Good morning, dear! He gave me a special look somehow You think I'm only a mother talking but no, no, I assure you! That's an unusual child

SOLYONY If this child were mine, I would have fried him in a skillet and eaten him (*He goes with his glass into the living room and sits down in the corner*)

NATASHA (*Covering her face with her hands*) Rude, ill bred man!

MASHA Happy is he who does not notice whether it's summer now or winter If I were in Moscow, I think I should scorn the weather

VERSHININ The other day I read the diary of a certain French Minister, written in prison The Minister was

convicted of fraud With what rapture and delight he mentions the birds he saw through the prison win dow and had never noticed before when he was a Minister And now of course that he s released it s the same as it was before he doesn t notice the birds Just as you won t notice Moscow when you live there. Happiness we have not and it does not exist we only long for it

TUSENBACH (*Taking a box from the table*) But where s the candy?

IRINA Solyony ate it all

TUSENBACH All of it?

ANFISA (*Serving tea*) A letter for you dear sir

VERSHININ For me? (*Taking the letter*) From my daughter (*Reading*) Yes of course Forgive me Maria Sergeevna I ll just slip out Not any tea for me— (*Getting up very much disturbed*) These eter nal messes

MASHA What is it? Not a secret?

VERSHININ (*In a low voice*) The wife has taken poison again Got to go I ll slip out won t be seen Terribly unpleasant all this (*Kissing* MASHA s *hand*) My dear kind good woman I ll slip out of here quietly (*He goes out*)

ANFISA Where is he going now? And I have poured his tea Such a

MASHA (*Losing her temper*) Let it be! Plaguing us around here there s no rest from you (*Going to the table with her cup*) I am tired of you old woman!

ANFISA Why are you offended? Darling!

ANDREI S VOICE Anfisa!

ANFISA (*Mocking him*) Anfisa! Sitting there (*She goes out*)

MASHA (*In the dining room at the table angrily*) Do let me sit down! (*Musses up the cards on the table*) Lounging here with the cards Drink your tea!

IRINA You are spiteful, Masha

MASHA If I m spiteful, don t talk to me Don t touch me!

TCHEBUTYKIN (*Laughing*) Don t touch her, don t touch

MASHA You are sixty years old, and you are like a little boy, always prattling the devil knows what

NATASHA (*Sighing*) Dear Masha, why use such expressions in your conversation? With your beautiful looks you d be, I ll tell you candidly, simply charming in a decent, well bred society, if it weren t for these words of yours *Je vous prie pardonnez moi Marie mais vous avez des manieres un peu grossieres*

TUSENBACH (*Suppressing a laugh*) Give me Give me Seems there s some cognac

NATASHA *Il parait que mon Bobik deja ne dort pas* he s waked up He doesn t seem to me very well today I m going to him excuse me (*She goes out*)

IRINA And where s Alexander Ignatievich gone?

MASHA Home There s something extraordinary the matter with his wife again

TUSENBACH (*Going to* SOLYONY, *with a decanter of cognac*) You sit by yourself all the time, you are thinking of something—and there s no grasping what it is Well, let s make peace Let s drink some cognac (*Drinking*) I ll have to play the piano all night to night probably, play all kinds of trash Come what may!

SOLYONY In Moscow there are two universities! (*Disapproval and hisses*) In Moscow there are two universities the old and the new And if you don t want to listen if my words irritate you I can stop talking I can even go to another room (*He goes out through one of the doors*)

TUSENBACH Bravo bravo! (*Laughing*) Ladies and gentlemen begin I am sitting down to play! Funny this Solyony (*Sitting down at the piano and playing a waltz*)

MASHA (*Waltzing by herself*) The Baron is drunk the Baron is drunk the Baron is drunk

(NATASHA *enters*)

NATASHA (*To* TCHEBUTYKIN) Ivan Romanovich!

(*She says something to* TCHEBUTYKIN *then goes out quietly* TCHEBUTYKIN *touches* TUSENBACH *on the shoulder and whispers something to him*)

IRINA What is it?

TCHEBUTYKIN It s time for us to go

TUSENBACH Good night It s time to go

IRINA But look here—what about the maskers?

ANDREI (*Embarrassed*) There won t be any maskers. Don t you see my dear Natasha says that Bobik isn t quite well and therefore In sum I don t know it s all the same to me absolutely

IRINA (*Shrugging her shoulders*) Bobik not well!

MASHA What of it! If they run us out we must go (*To* IRINA) It is not Bobik that s sick but she herself is Here! (*Tapping her forehead*) Common creature!

(ANDREI *goes through the right door into his room* TCHEBUTYKIN *follows him in the dining room good-bys are being said*)

FEDOTIK What a pity! I counted on spending the evening, but if the child is sick, of course Tomorrow I'll bring him some toys

RODAY (*In a loud voice*) I purposely took a nap after dinner today, thought I would dance all night Why, it's only nine o'clock now

MASHA Let's go out in the street we'll talk things over there We'll decide what's what

(*Sounds of* Good by! Farewell! *You can hear* TUSENBACH's *gay laughter Everyone is gone* ANFISA *and a maid clear the table put out the lights A nurse can be heard singing* ANDREI *in his coat and hat and* TCHEBUTYKIN *enter quietly*)

TCHEBUTYKIN I've had no time to marry because life has flashed by me like lightning and also because I was madly in love with your mother, who was married

ANDREI One shouldn't marry One shouldn't, it's boring

TCHEBUTYKIN That may be so, but the loneliness! You may philosophize as much as you please but loneliness is a frightful thing my boy Though as a matter of fact of course it's absolutely all the same

ANDREI Let's go quick

TCHEBUTYKIN Why hurry? We have time

ANDREI I am afraid the wife might stop us

TCHEBUTYKIN Ah!

ANDREI Today I shan't play, but just sit I don't feel well What shall I do, Ivan Romanovich, for shortness of breath?

TCHEBUTYKIN Why ask me? Don't remember my boy Don't know

ANDREI Let s go through the kitchen

(They go out A ring then another ring voices are heard laughter IRINA *enters)*

IRINA What is it?

ANFISA *(In a whisper)* The maskers!

(A ring)

IRINA Tell them Nursey nobody s at home They must excuse us

*(*ANFISA *goes out* IRINA *paces the room thinking things over she is perturbed* SOLYONY *enters)*

SOLYONY *(In a quandary)* Nobody here But where are they all?

IRINA Gone home

SOLYONY That s odd Are you alone here?

IRINA Alone *(A pause)* Good by

SOLYONY I behaved without enough restraint just now tactlessly But you are not like the rest of them you are superior and pure you can see the truth Only you alone can understand me I love you deeply love you without end

IRINA Good by! Go away

SOLYONY I can t live without you *(Following her)* Oh my delight! *(Through his tears)* Oh happiness! Such glorious wonderful marvelous eyes as I have never seen in any other woman

IRINA *(Coldly)* Stop it Vasili Vasilievich!

SOLYONY I m speaking of love to you for the first time and it s as if I were not on earth but on another planet *(Rubbing his forehead)* Well it s all the same Love is not to be forced certainly But lucky rivals I cannot have Cannot I swear to you by all that s holy I ll kill any rival Oh wonderful creature!

(NATASHA *passes by with a candle*)

NATASHA (*Looks in at one door then at another and passes by the door leading into her husband s room*) Andrei is there Let him read Excuse me, Vasili Vasilievich, I didn t know you were here I m in my dressing gown

SOLYONY It s all the same to me Good by! (*He goes out*)

NATASHA And you are tired, my dear, poor girl! (*Kissing* IRINA) You should go to bed a little earlier

IRINA Is Bobik asleep?

NATASHA Asleep But not sound asleep By the way, dear, I wanted to tell you, but you are never here, or else I haven t time In the nursery Bobik has now, seems to me it s cold and damp And your room is so good for a child My dear, my own, move in with Olya for a while!

IRINA (*Not understanding*) Where?

(*A troika with bells is heard driving up to the house*)

NATASHA You and Olya will be in one room, for this little while, and your room will be for Bobik He s such a darling, today I say to him Bobik, you are mine! Mine! And he looks at me with his little eyes (*A ring*) It must be Olga How late she is!

(*A* MAID *comes and whispers in* NATASHA S *ear*)

NATASHA Protopopov? What a queer man! Protopopov has come, he s asking me to go for a ride with him in a troika (*Laughing*) How strange these men are ! (*A ring*) Somebody s come out there I might go ride for a quarter of an hour (*To the* MAID) Tell him right away—(*A ring*) There s a ring Olga must be here (*She goes out*)

(*The* MAID *runs out* IRINA *sits there thinking* KULYGIN OLGA *enter behind them* VERSHININ)

KULYGIN There you are! And they said there would be a party

VERSHININ Strange I went away a while ago half an hour ago and they were expecting the maskers

IRINA They have all gone

KULYGIN And Masha s gone? Where did she go? And why is Protopopov downstairs waiting in the troika? Who s he waiting for?

IRINA Don t ask questions I m tired

KULYGIN Well Miss Caprice

OLGA The council has just finished I m exhausted Our headmistress is ill and I m taking her place My head *my head aches my head* (*Sitting down*) Andrei lost two hundred roubles yesterday at cards The whole town is talking about it

KULYGIN Yes and I got tired at the council (*He sits down*)

VERSHININ My wife decided just now to scare me she almost poisoned herself It all passed over and I m happy I m easy now The order is we must leave here So—let m wish you all well Fyodor Ilyich go somewh re with me I can t stay at home absolutely cannot Let s go!

KULYGIN I m tired I m not going (*Rising*) I m tired Has the wife come home?

IRINA She must have

KULYGIN (*Kissing* IRINA S *hand*) Goodby Tom rrow and the day after I ll rest all day long I wish you well (*Going*) I d like some tea very much I counted on spending the evening in pleasant company and—o

fallacem hominum spem! Accusative case exclamatory

VERSHININ Which means I'm going by myself (*He goes out with* KULYGIN *whistling*)

OLGA My head aches, my head Andrei has lost the whole town is talking I'll go lie down (*Starting out of the room*) Tomorrow I am free O Lord, how pleasant it is! Tomorrow is free, day after tomorrow is free My head aches, my head (*She goes out*)

IRINA (*Alone*) They've all gone There's nobody here (*In the street an accordion is heard the* NURSE *sings a song*)

NATASHA (*With a fur coat and cap passes through the dining room behind her a* MAID) I'll be home in half an hour I'll take just a little ride (*She goes out*)

IRINA (*Left alone dejected*) To Moscow! To Moscow! To Moscow!

Curtain

ACT THREE

OLGA'S *and* IRINA'S *room To the left and to the right are beds with screens around them It is going on three o'clock in the morning Offstage they are ringing the fire bell for a fire that began a long time back Plainly no one in the house has gone to bed yet* MASHA *lies on the sofa she wears as usual a black dress* OLGA *and* ANFISA *enter*

ANFISA Sitting down there now under the staircase I say— If you please come upstairs as if I say you could sit there like that! —they are crying Daddy they say we dont know where Daddy is God forbid, they say hes burned! They thought that up! And in the courtyard there are some people They are undressed too

OLGA (*Taking some dresses out of the closet*) Here this gray one—take it And this one here The blouse too And take the skirt Nursey All Kirsanoffsky Street seems to be burned down Take this Take this (*Throws the dresses for her to catch*) The poor Vershinins were frightened Their house nearly burned up They must spend the night here We cant let them go home At poor Fedotik s everything got burned theres nothing left

ANFISA Youll have to call Ferapont Olyushka or I cant carry

OLGA (*She rings*) Nobody answers (*Through the door*) Come here whoever it is! (*Through the open door she sees a window glowing red with the fire a fire brigade is heard passing the house*) How frightful! And how sickening! (FERAPONT *enters*) Here take this and carry it downstairs Down there under the staircase are the young Kolotilin girls Give it to them And give this

FERAPONT Yes miss In the year 12, Moscow also burned Oh my Lord God! The French were astonished

OLGA Go on step along

FERAPONT Yes miss (*He goes out*)

OLGA Nursey dear give everything away We dont

need anything Give everything away! Nursey I'm tired, I can barely stand on my feet The Vershinins shouldn't be allowed to go home The girls can sleep in the drawing room, and Alexander Ignatievich downstairs at the Baron's Fedotik too at the Baron's, or let him stay with us in the dining room The doctor, as if he'd done it on purpose, is drunk, terribly drunk, and we mustn't send anyone to him And Vershinin's wife too in the drawing room

ANFISA (*Wearily*) Olyushka, dear, don't you drive me away! Don't drive me away!

OLGA You are talking nonsense, Nurse Nobody's driving you away

ANFISA (*Laying her head on* OLGA'S *breast*) My own, my treasure, I do try, I work I'll get feeble and everybody will say get out! And where will I go? Eighty years old My eighty second year

OLGA You sit down a while Nursey You are tired, poor thing (*Making her sit down*) Rest, my dear good old Nurse You look so pale!

(NATASHA *enters*)

NATASHA They are saying it around that we must form right off a relief society for those who have been burnt out Why not! It's a fine idea We must be quick to help poor people that's the duty of the rich Bobik and Sofotchka have just gone to sleep, they sleep as if nothing had happened There are so many people everywhere here that anywhere you go the house is full There's influenza in town now, I'm afraid the children may catch it

OLGA (*Not listening to her*) In this room you don't see the fire it's peaceful here

NATASHA Yes I must be very much disheveled (*In front of the mirror*) They say I have filled out And it isn t true! Not at all! And Masha s sleeping exhausted poor thing (*To* ANFISA *coldly*) In my presence don t you dare sit down! Get up! Get out of here! (ANFISA *goes out a pause*) Why you keep this old woman I don t understand!

OLGA (*Taken aback*) Excuse me I don t understand either

NATASHA For no reason at all she s here She is a peasant she should live in the country What a lot of pampering! I like in a house to have order Useless people shouldn t be in a house (*Stroking* OLGA s *cheek*) Poor dear you are tired! Our headmistress is tired And when my Sofotchka grows up and enters high school I shall be afraid of you

OLGA I shan t be the headmistress

NATASHA You will be elected Olitchka that s decided

OLGA I ll decline it I can t I ve not the strength for it (*Drinking some water*) You were so rude just now to Nurse Forgive me I m not in any condition to bear It s getting all black before my eyes

NATASHA (*Disturbed*) Forgive me Olya forgive me I didn t mean to distress you

(MASHA *gets up takes a pillow and goes out angrily*)

OLGA Understand my dear perhaps we were brought up strangely but I can t bear it That kind of attitude depresses me I get sick I m just sick at heart!

NATASHA Forgive me forgive me (*Kissing her*)

OLGA Every rudeness even the slightest, even a word indelicately spoken upsets me

NATASHA I often talk too much, it's true, but you must agree, my dear, she might very well have lived in the country

OLGA She s been these thirty years with us

NATASHA But now, though, she can t do anything It s either that I don t understand or else you don t want to understand me She is not up to doing any sort of work, she just sleeps and sits

OLGA But let her sit

NATASHA (*Surprised*) How let her sit? She s a servant nevertheless (*Tearfully*) I don t understand you Olya I have a nurse, have a wet nurse, we have a maid, a cook What do we have that old woman too for? What for?

(*Behind the scene the fire alarm rings*)

OLGA I have aged ten years in this one night!

NATASHA We must come to some sort of understanding, Olya. You are at high school, I m at home you have the teaching, I have the housekeeping And if I say anything about the servants I know what I m saying I know what I m saying And by tomorrow there won t be this old thief here, this old hag (*Stamping her foot*) This witch Don t dare cross me! Don t you dare! (*Catching herself*) Really, if you don t move downstairs we ll always be quarreling It s terrible

(KULYGIN *enters*)

KULYGIN Where is Masha? It s quite time to go home The fire, they say, is subsiding (*Stretching*) Burnt just one section of the town in spite of the fact that there was a wind at first it looked as if the whole town was on fire (*Sitting down*) I m tired out Olitchka my dear I often think if there hadn t

been Masha I d have married you Olitchka You are so good I m exhausted (*Listening for something*)

OLGA What is it?

KULYGIN As if on purpose the doctor is drunk he s terribly drunk As if on purpose! (*Getting up*) There he is coming here I imagine Do you hear? Yes coming (*Laughing*) What a fellow really I ll hide (*Going to the cupboard and standing in the corner*) Such a rascal!

OLGA For two years he hasn t been drinking and here all of a sudden he s gone and got drunk (*Following* NATASHA *to the back of the room*)

(TCHEBUTYKIN *enters without staggering as if he were sober he walks across the room stops looks around then goes to the washstand and begins to wash his hands*)

TCHEBUTYKIN (*Crossly*) The Devil take all of em take —They think I m a doctor know how to cure any sickness but I know absolutely nothing I ve forgotten everything I ever knew remember nothing absolutely nothing (OLGA *and* NATASHA *go out unnoticed by him*) The Devil take it! Last Wednesday I treated a woman at Zasip—she died and I m to blame for her dying Yes I knew a little something twenty five years ago but now I don t remember anything Nothing Perhaps I m not even a man but only give the appearance here of having hands and legs and a head perhaps I don t even exist and it only seems to me that I walk and eat and sleep (*Crying*) Oh that I didn t exist! (*No longer crying crossly*) The Devil knows ! Three days ago there was a conversation at the club they were talking

about Shakespeare, Voltaire I hadn t read them hadn t read them at all, but I looked as if I had read them And the others did too just as I did The banality of it! The meanness! And that woman I killed Wednesday came back to me And every thing came back to me, and it weighed on my soul crooked, foul, disgusting I went and got drunk

(IRINA, VERSHININ *and* TUSENBACH *enter* TUSENBACH *wears civilian clothes new and stylish*)

IRINA Let s sit here Nobody s coming here

VERSHININ If it were not for the soldiers, the whole town would be burnt up Brave boys! (*Rubbing his hands with pleasure*) Salt of the earth! Ah, what brave boys!

KULYGIN What s the time, gentlemen?

TUSENBACH Going on four by now It s getting light

IRINA Everybody is sitting in the dining room, nobody is going out. And that Solyony of yours is sitting (*To* TCHEBUTYKIN) Doctor, you should have gone to sleep

TCHEBUTYKIN Not at all Thank you (*Combing his beard*)

KULYGIN (*Laughing*) You got a little tispy Ivan Romanovich! (*Slapping him on the shoulder*) Bravo! *In vino veritas* said the ancients

TUSENBACH They keep asking me to arrange a concert for the benefit of the refugees

IRINA Well, who is there to ?

TUSENBACH It could be arranged if we wanted to do it Maria Sergeevna in my opinion, plays the piano wonderfully

KULYGIN She does play wonderfully!

IRINA She has forgotten how by now It s three years since she s played Or four

TUSENBACH Here in this town absolutely nobody un derstands music not one soul but I I do understand it and on my word of honor I assure you that Maria Sergeevna plays magnificently almost with genius

KULYGIN You are right Baron I love her very much I love my Masha She s sweet

TUSENBACH Think of being able to play so splendidly and at the same time know quite well that nobody nobody understands you!

KULYGIN (*Sighing*) Yes But is it proper for her to take part in a concert? (*A pause*) Really gentle men I don t know anything about that Perhaps it would be a good thing I must admit our director is a fine man in fact very fine of the brainiest but he has such views that Of course it s not his affair but just the same if you like I might talk with him

(TCHEBUTYKIN is taking up a china clock in both hands and examining it)

VERSHININ I got all covered with dirt at the fire—I m not presentable (*A pause*) Yesterday I heard in pass ing that they might transfer our brigade somewhere far away Some say to the Kingdom of Poland others—that it looks like Chita

TUSENBACH I heard that too And so what? The town will be completely empty then

IRINA And we shall go away!

TCHEBUTYKIN (*He drops the clock shattering it*) All to pieces!

(A pause everyone is distressed and embarrassed)

KULYGIN (*Picks up the pieces*) To break such a pre

cious thing— Oh, Ivan Romanovich, Ivan Romanovich! Minus zero to you for conduct

IRINA That clock was our dear mother s

TCHEBUTYKIN Perhaps Mother s, then mother s Perhaps I didn t break it but only seemed to break it Perhaps it only seems to us that we exist, and we don t really I don t know anything, nobody knows anything (*By the door*) What are you looking at? Natasha has an affair with Protopopov, and you don t see it There you sit and see nothing, and Natasha has an affair with Protopopov (*Singing*) How do you like swallowing that dose ? (*He goes out*)

VERSHININ Yes (*Laughing*) How strange all this is at bottom! (*A pause*) When the fire began, I ran home fast, got there, looked our house was unharmed and out of danger, but my two girls stood at the door in nothing but their underclothes, the mother wasn t there, people were scurrying about, horses running around, and dogs, and on my girls faces was all that anxiety, terror, entreaty, who knows what, my heart was wrung when I saw those faces My God, I thought, what more will these girls have to go through in a long life! I grabbed them ran and kept thinking one thing What more will they have to live through in this world! (*Fire alarm a pause*) I came this way and the mother was here, shouting, angry

(MASHA *enters with a pillow and sits down on the sofa*)

VERSHININ And while my girls were standing at the door in nothing but their underclothes and the

was red with the fire, the noise was terrible I reflected that something like that used to happen when the enemy made a sudden raid plundering and burning as they went Meanwhile what a difference there is essentialy between what is and what was! And a little more time will pass some two or three hundred years and they will look on this life of ours now with fear and derision everything now will seem then to be all angles and heavy and most inconvenient and strange Oh what a life that will be, what a life! (*Laughing*) Forgive me I m philosophizing again Allow me to continue ladies and gentlemen I d like awfully to philosophize now that I m in such a mood for it (*A pause*) It s as if everybody were asleep And so I say What a life it will be! You can just imagine Here in town there are only three of your kind now but in coming generations there will be more always more and more a time will come when everything will veer to you they will live like you and then too later on you ll get antiquated, there ll be people springing up who are better than you (*Laughing*) I am in a most singular mood today I want like the devil to live (*Singing*) Unto love all ages bow its pangs are blest

MASHA Tram tum tum

VERSHININ Tum tum

MASHA Tra ra ra?

VERSHININ Tra ta ta. (*Laughing*)

(FEDOTIK *enters*)

FEDOTIK (*Dancing*) Burnt out burnt out! Absolutely everything!

(*Laughter*)

IRINA What sort of a joke is that? Is it all gone?

FEDOTIK (*Laughing*) Absolutely everything There's nothing left And the guitar burned and the photography outfit burned, and all my letters And I wanted to present you with a notebook it burned up too

(SOLYONY *enters*)

IRINA No Please go away, Vasili Vasilievich You can t come in here

SOLYONY But why is it the Baron can and I can't?

VERSHININ We must go, really How s the fire?

SOLYONY They say its s subsiding No it s decidedly strange to me, why is it the Baron can and I can't? (*Taking out the perfume bottle and sprinkling himself*)

VERSHININ Tram tum tum

MASHA Tram tum

VERSHININ (*Laughing to* SOLYONY) Let s go to the dining room

SOLYONY Very well, I ll make a note of it so This thought could be made more clear, but 'twould annoy the geese I fear (*Looking at* TUSENBACH) Chick, chick, chick (*He goes out with* VERSHININ *and* FEDOTIK)

IRINA How that Solyony has smoked things up (*With surprise*) The Baron is asleep! Baron! Baron!

TUSENBACH (*Waking up*) I m tired, however The brickyard I m not saying this in my sleep, for it s a fact that I ll soon be going to the brickyard to start work It s already been discussed (*To* IRINA, *tenderly*) You are so pale, beautiful bewitching It seems to me your paleness brightens the dark air like light You are sad, you are not satisfied with

life. Oh come along with me lets go to work together!

MASHA Nikolai Lvovich do go on out of here!

TUSENBACH (*Laughing*) You here? I didnt see you (*Kissing* IRINA'S *hand*) Good by Im going Im looking at you now and am reminded of how long ago once on your saints day you were all so gay and happy talking of the joy of work And what a happy life I dreamed of then! Where is it? (*Kissing her hand*) You have tears in your eyes Go to bed Its getting light now morning has begun If only it were granted me to give my life for you!

MASHA Nikolai Lvovich go on! Why really what

TUSENBACH Im going (*He goes out*)

MASHA (*Lying down*) Are you asleep Fyodor?

KULYGIN Eh?

MASHA You ought to go home

KULYGIN My darling Masha my dear Masha

IRINA Shes tired You ought to let her rest Fedya

KULYGIN Im going right away My good wife darling I love you my one and only

MASHA (*Bored and cross*) *Amo amas amat amamus amatis amant*

KULYGIN (*Laughing*) No really shes amazing Ive been married to you for seven years but it seems as if wed married only yesterday Word of honor! No really you are an amazing woman I am content, I am content, I am content!

MASHA Bored bored bored (*She sits up and speaks sitting*) It just wont go out of my head Its simply shocking Its there like a nail in my head I cant stay silent I mean about Andrei Hes

mortgaged this house to the bank and his wife grabbed all the money, but the house belongs not just to him, but to the four of us! He ought to know that if he's a decent man

KULYGIN What do you care Masha! Why should you? Andrusha is in debt all round, well, God reward him!

MASHA Anyhow it's shocking (*She lies back down*)

KULYGIN You and I are not poor I work I go to the high school, and then give private lessons I'm an honest man Simple *Omnia mea mecum porto* as they say

MASHA I don't need anything But injustice makes me furious (*A pause*) Go on, Fyodor!

KULYGIN (*Kissing her*) You are tired rest about half an hour, and I'll sit and wait out there Sleep (*Going*) I am content, I am content, I am content (*He goes out*)

IRINA How small our Andrei has grown how he has dried up and aged beside that woman! There was a time when he was preparing for a professorship and yesterday he was bragging that at last he could become a member of the District Board He a member of the board and Protopopov chairman The whole town's talking is laughing and he's the only one who knows nothing and sees nothing And now, everybody has rushed off to the fire but he sits there in his room and pays not the least attention to it He just plays the violin (*Nervously*) Oh it's awful aw ful, awful! (*Crying*) I can't, I can't bear any more! I can't—I can't!

(OLGA *enters She tidies up her dressing table*)

IRINA (*Sobbing aloud*) Cast me out, cast me out, I can't stand any more!

OLGA (*Alarmed*) What is it what is it? Darling!

IRINA (*Sobbing*) Where? Where is it all gone? Where is it? Oh my God my God! I ve forgotten everything I ve forgotten it s muddled in my head I don t remember what in Italian *window* is or the ceiling there I m forgetting everything every day forgetting and life slips away and will never return never we ll never go to Moscow I can see we ll never go

OLGA Darling darling

IRINA (*Restraining herself*) Oh I m miserable I can t work and won t work I m sick of it sick of it! I was a telegraph operator and now have a place with the Town Board and hate and despise everything they give me to do I m going on twenty four and have already been working a long time and my brain s drying up I m getting thin losing my looks, getting old and there s nothing nothing—no satisfaction of any kind—and time is passing and it all seems to be moving away from any real beautiful life all moving away farther and farther into some abyss I m in despair and how I m alive how it is I haven t killed myself I can t understand

OLGA Don t cry my own little girl don t cry

IRINA *I am not crying not crying I m sick of it.* Now look—I am not crying any more I m sick of it I m sick of it!

OLGA Darling I m telling you as a sister as a friend if you want my advice, marry the Baron!

(IRINA *weeps silently*)

OLGA Why you respect him you value him highly It s true he s not good looking but he s so decent and clean Why one doesn t marry for love but to do

one s duty At least, I think so, and I would marry without being in love At any rate I d marry anyone who proposed to me so long as he was an honorable man I d marry even an old man

IRINA I kept expecting us to move to Moscow, there I d meet my real beloved I dreamed of him, loved him But it turned out just foolishness, just foolishness!

OLGA (*Embracing her sister*) My dear, lovely sister, I understand it all, when Baron Nikolai I vovich left the military service and came to see us in civilian clothes, he seemed to me so homely that I even cried He asked, Why are you crying? How could I tell him! But if God should grant he married you I d be happy Now, that s different, quite different!

(NATASHA *crosses the stage from the right door to the left without speaking a candle in her hand*)

MASHA (*Sitting up*) She walks as if she had been the one to start the fire

OLGA Masha, you are silly! The silliest one in our family is you Forgive me, please

(*A pause*)

MASHA I want to confess my dear sisters I m tired in my soul I ll confess to you and then to nobody else, never I ll say it this minute (*Quietly*) It s my secret, but you must know everything I can t be silent (*A pause*) I love, love I love that man You just saw him Well there it is In one word, I love Vershinin

OLGA (*Going behind her screen*) Stop that At any rate I m not hearing

MASHA What is there to do about it? (*Clutching her head*) At first he seemed to me strange, then I felt

sorry for him Then I began to love him be gan to love him with his voice his words his misfortunes his two girls

OLGA (*Behind the screen*) I m not hearing you at any rate Whatever silly things you say at any rate I m not hearing you!

MASHA Oh Olya you are silly I love—such that is to say is my fate That is to say my lot is such And he loves me All that is frightening Yes? Is it wrong? (*Taking* IRINA *by the hand and drawing her to her*) Oh my darling how are we going to live our life what s to become of us? When one reads some novel all this seems old and all of it so understandable but when you fall in love yourself you begin to see that nobody knows anything and everybody must decide for himself My darlings my sisters I confessed to you now I ll be silent I ll be now like Gogol s madman silence silence

(ANDREI *enters followed by* FERAPONT)

ANDREI (*Annoyed*) What do you want? I don t understand

FERAPONT (*Standing in the door impatiently*) Andrei Sergeevich I have already told you ten times

ANDREI First, I am not Andrei Sergeevich to you but Your Excellency!

FERAPONT The firemen Your Excellentness ask your permission to go to the river through your garden As it is they are driving round and round—it s pure punishment

ANDREI Very well Tell them very well (FERAPONT *goes out*) That s enough of them Where s Olga? (OLGA *comes out from behind the screen*) I ve come to ask

you to give me the key to the cupboard I've lost mine You have one of the little keys (OLGA *gives him the key without speaking* IRINA *goes behind her screen a pause*) And what a tremendous fire! It's starting to die down now The devil take it, that Ferapont's made me lose my temper I said a stupid thing to him Your Excellency (*A pause*) But why are you silent, Olya? (*A pause*) It's high time to stop this silliness and stop pouting for no reason at all You are here, Masha, Irina's here, well, that's fine—let's have it out once and for all What have you got against me? Now what?

OLGA Let it rest, Andrusha Tomorrow we'll have it out (*Anxiously*) What a night of torment!

ANDREI (*He is very much confused*) Don't be upset. I ask you absolutely in cold blood what have you got against me? Speak right out

VERSHININ'S VOICE Tram tum tum!

MASHA (*Rising in a loud voice*) Tra ta ta! (*To* OLGA) Good by Olya, God be with you! (*She goes behind the screen kisses* IRINA) Sleep well Good by Andrei Go on away, they are tired Tomorrow you will have it out (*She goes out*)

OLGA Indeed, Andrusha let's put it off till tomorrow (*She goes behind her screen*) It's time to go to sleep

ANDREI I'll just say it and go Right away In the first place you have something against Natasha, my wife and that I have noticed from the very day of my wedding Natasha is a splendid honest person straightforward and honorable—in my opinion I love and respect my wife, understand I respect her and demand that others respect her too I repeat she

is an honest honorable person and all your dissatis factions excuse me are simply caprices (*A pause*) In the second place you seem to be angry because of the fact that I am not a professor don t occupy myself with learning But I serve in the Zemstvo I am a member of the District Board and this service of mine I consider just as sacred and lofty as service to learning I m a member of the District Board and I m proud of it if you want to know (*A pause*) In the third place I have something else to say I mortgaged the house without asking your permission

Of that I am guilty yes and ask you to forgive me I was forced to it by debts Thirty five thou sand I don t play cards any more gave it up long ago but the chief thing I can say in my own justification is that you—girls as of the privileged sex you receive a pension while I didn t have my earnings so to speak (*A pause*)

KULYGIN (*At the doo*) Masha not here? (*Perturbed*) But where is she? That s strange (*He goes out*)

ANDREI They don t listen Natasha is a superior honest person (*Walks up and down the stage in silence then stops*) When I married I thought we should be happy everybody happy but my God I (*Crying*) My dear sisters darling sisters don t believe me don t believe (*He goes out*)

KULYGIN (*At the door anxiously*) Where is Masha? Masha s not here? What an astonishing business! (*He goes out*)

(*Fire-ala m the stage is empty*)

IRINA (*Beh nd the screen*) Olya! Who is that knocking on the floor?

OLGA It s the doctor I an Romanovich He s drunk

IRINA What a torn up night! (*A pause*) Olya! (*Looking out from behind the screen*) Did you hear? They are taking the brigade from us, transferring it somewhere far away

OLGA That's only a rumor

IRINA We'll be left alone then Olya!

OLGA Well?

IRINA Darling, precious, I respect, I value the Baron, he's a marvelous person, I'll marry him, I consent, only let's go to Moscow! I beg you, let's go! There's nothing in the world better than Moscow! Let's go, Olya! Let's go!

Curtain

ACT FOUR

An old garden in front of the PROZOROFFS *house A long alley of fir trees at the end of which a river is seen On the other side of the river a wood To the right a terrace of the house and on it a table with bottles and glasses you can see they have just been drinking champagne Twelve o clock noon Now and then on their way from the street to the river people cross the garden four or five soldiers pass that way walking fast* TCHEBUTYKIN *in an amiable mood which does not leave him during the entire Act sits in an easy chair in the garden waiting to be called he wears a military cap and carries a stick* IRINA KULYGIN *with a decoration around his neck with no*

mustache and TUSENBACH *are standing on the terrace saying good by to* FEDOTIK *and* RODAY *who are going down the steps both officers are in campaign uniform*

TUSENBACH (*Exchanging kisses with* FEDOTIK) You are a good fellow we lived like good friends (*Exchanging kisses with* RODAY) Once again Good by my dear boy

IRINA Till we meet again

FEDOTIK It s not meet again but good by we shall never meet again

KULYGIN Who knows! (*Wiping his eyes smiling*) There I m beginning to cry too

IRINA Some day we ll run across each other

FEDOTIK In ten or fifteen years maybe? But by then we ll scarcely know each other we ll greet each other coldly (*Taking a snapshot*) Stand still Once more for the last time

RODAY (*Embracing* TUSENBACH) We won t meet again (*Kissing* IRINA s *hand*) Thank you for every thing for everything!

FEDOTIK (*Vexed*) Oh wait a little!

TUSENBACH God grant we meet Write us though Without fail write

RODAY (*Casting a glance around the garden*) Good by trees! (*Shouting*) Yoo hool (*A pause*) Good by echo!

KULYGIN I am afraid you ll marry there in Poland The Polish wife will embrace you and say Kochany! (*Laughing*)

FEDOTIK (*Looking at his watch*) There s less than an hour left Out of our battery only Solyony is going on the barge e are with the rank and file Three battery

divisions are going today, tomorrow three more—and quiet and peace will reign in the town

TUSENBACH And terrible boredom

RODAY And where is Maria Sergeevna?

KULYGIN Masha is in the garden

FEDOTIK We must say good by to her

RODAY Good by, I must go or I ll be crying (*He hurriedly embraces* TUSENBACH *and* KULYGIN, *kisses* IRINA's *hand*) It was fine living here

FEDOTIK (*To* KULYGIN) This is a memento for you A notebook with a pencil We ll go this way to the river (*They move off both look back*)

RODAY (*Shouts*) Yoo hoo!

KULYGIN (*Shouts*) Good by!

(*At the rear of the stage* FEDOTIK *and* RODAY *meet* MASHA *and bid her good by She walks away with them*)

IRINA They are gone (*Sitting down on the bottom step of the terrace*)

TCHEBUTYKIN And forgot to say good by to me

IRINA And what about you?

TCHEBUTYKIN And I forgot too somehow Anyway I ll soon see them, I m leaving tomorrow Yes One more short day is left In a year they will retire me, I ll come back here and live out my little span near you Just one short year is left before my pension (*He puts one newspaper in his pocket and takes out another*) I ll come here to you and change my life from the very roots I ll become so quiet right—right minded, respectable

IRINA And you really should change your life, dovey You should somehow

TCHEBUTYKIN Yes I feel so (*Singing softly*) Ta ra ra boom-de aye Sit on a curb I may

KULYGIN You re incorrigible Ivan Romanovich! You re incorrigible!

TCHEBUTYKIN Now then if you d only teach me! Then I d be reformed

IRINA Fyodor has shaved off his mustache I can t bear to look at him

KULYGIN Why not?

TCHEBUTYKIN I could say what your physiognomy looks like now but I can t

KULYGIN Well! It s the accepted thing it is *modus vivendi* Our director shaved off his mustache and as soon as I became inspector I shaved clean too Nobody likes it but that s all the same to me I am content I may be with a mustache or without a mustache but I m equally content (*Sitting down*)

(*At the rear of the stage* ANDREI *passes wheeling a baby-carriage with a child asleep in it*)

IRINA Ivan Romanovich my own darling I am terribly disturbed You were on the boulevard yesterday tell me what happened there?

TCHEBUTYKIN What happened? Nothing Fidlesticks (*Reading the newspaper*) All the same!

KULYKIN What they are saying is that Solyony and the Baron met yesterday on the boulevard near the theatre

TUSENBACH Stop it! Well what really (*With a wave of his hand he goes into the house*)

KULYGIN Near the theatre Solyony began picking on the Baron and he wouldn t tolerate it he said something insulting

TCHEBUTYKIN I don t know It s all nonsense

KULYGIN In a certain theological seminary a teacher wrote on a composition paper, Nonsense and the pupil read consensus —thought it was written in Latin (*Laughing*) Amazingly funny It s said that Solyony is in love with Irina, and that he s begun to hate the Baron That s understandable Irina is a very nice girl She even resembles Masha, just as thoughtful It s merely that you have a gentle character, Irina Though Masha, too, has a very fine character I love her, my Masha

(*At the rear of the garden offstage* Yoo, hoo!)

IRINA (*Shivering*) Somehow everything frightens me today (*A pause*) I have everything all ready, after dinner I m sending off my things The Baron and I are getting married tomorrow, and tomorrow we are leaving for the brickyard, and day after tomorrow I ll be at the school, a new life is beginning Somehow God will help me! When I passed my teacher s examination I cried for pure joy so happy (*A pause*) The cart will soon be here for my things

KULYGIN That s all very well, only somehow it s not serious Just ideas—and very little seriousness However, I wish you luck with all my heart

TCHEBUTYKIN (*Tenderly*) My darling, my dear child My treasure You have gone far away I can t catch up with you I m left behind, like a bird of passage that has grown old, that can t fly Fly on, my dears, fly on and God be with you! (*A pause*) It s too bad, Fyodor Ilyich you shaved off your mustache

KULYGIN That ll do from you! (*Sighing*) Well today the officers are leaving and everything will go on again as of old Whatever they may say, Masha is a good, honest woman and I love her very much and I

am thankful for my fate People s fate differs In the excise office here a certain Kozyroff works He went to school with me was expelled from the fifth class at high school because he just couldn t understand *ut consecutivum* Now he is terribly poor ill and when we meet I say to him Greetings *ut consecutivum!* Yes he says that s it *consecutivum* and then coughs And here I am all my life I ve been successful I am happy I have the Order of Stanislav Second Degree and am teaching others myself now that *ut consecutivum* Of course I am a clever man cleverer than many others but happiness doesn t consist in that

(In the ho se they are playing The Maiden s Prayer on the piano)

IRINA And tomorrow evening I won t be hearing that Maiden s Prayer any more and won t be meeting Protopopov *(A pa se)* And Protopopov is sitting there in the drawing room now he came again today

KULYGIN The headmistress has not come yet?

IRINA No They have sent for her If only you knew how hard it is for me to live here alone without Olya She lives at th high school she s the h a lmistress busy all day long w ith her duties and I m alone I am bored w ith nothing to do and the very room I live in is hateful So I have made up my mind If it isn t my lot to be in Mosco v then let it be so That s my lot There s nothing to be done All is God s will that s the truth Nikolai Lvovich proposed to me. Well then? I thought it o er and made up my mind. He is a good man it is really amazing ho v good

And suddenly as if wings had grown on my soul, I grew happier, relieved, and felt once more the desire for work, work Except that something happened yesterday, there s something hidden that s hanging over me

TCHEBUTYKIN Consensus Nonsense

NATASHA (*At the window*) The headmistress!

KULYGIN The headmistress has arrived Let s go (*He goes with* IRINA *into the house*)

TCHEBUTYKIN (*Reading the newspaper softly singing to himself*) Ta ra ra boom de aye Sit on the curb I may

(MASHA *approaches in the background* ANDREI *is seen pushing the baby carriage*)

MASHA There he sits, all settled

TCHEBUTYKIN And what?

MASHA (*Sitting down*) Nothing (*A pause*) Did you love my mother?

TCHEBUTYKIN Very much

MASHA And did she love you?

TCHEBUTYKIN (*After a pause*) That I no longer remember

MASHA Is mine here? Our cook Marfa used to talk about her policeman like that mine Is mine" here?

TCHEBUTYKIN Not yet

MASHA When you get happiness in snatches, in bits, and you lose it, like me, then little by little you harden you grow bitter (*Pointing to her breast*) Right here I m boiling (*Looking at her brother* ANDREI *pushing the baby-carriage*) There s Andrei, our little brother All our hopes gone Once upon a time thousands of people were hoisting a bell a lot of effor

and money were spent and then suddenly it fell and broke Suddenly for neither one reason nor another The same with Andrei

ANDREI And when will they finally quiet down in the house? Such noise!

TCHEBUTYKIN Soon (*Looking at his watch*) I have a very old watch with chimes (*Winding the watch it chimes*) The first second and fifth batteries are going at one o clock sharp (*A pause*) And I tomorrow

ANDREI For good?

TCHEBUTYKIN I don t know I might return in a year Though the devil knows it s all the same

(*Somewhere far off a harp and violin are playing*)

ANDREI The town will be dead As if they had covered it with a cowl (*A pause*) Something happened yesterday near the theatre everybody is talking about it but I don t know what it was

TCHEBUTYKIN *Nothing* Nonsense Solyony began to pick on the Baron and he lost his temper and insulted him and it got finally to the point where Solyony had to challenge him to a duel (*Looks at his watch*) It s time now I believe. At half past twelve in the State forest there the one we see from here beyond the river Piff—paff (*Laughing*) Solyony imagines he is Lermontov and even writes verses Now jokes are jokes but it is the third duel for him

MASHA For whom?

TCHEBUTYKIN For Solyony

MASHA And for the Baron?

TCHEBUTYKIN What for the Baron?

(*A pause*)

MASHA I m all confused in the head All the same I say

it shouldn't be allowed He might wound the Baron or even kill him

TCHEBUTYKIN The Baron is a good man but one baron more, one less—isn't it all the same? Let them! All the same! (*Beyond the garden there are shouts* 'Yoo hoo *Answering the shout*) You can wait (*To* MASHA) That's Skvortzoff shouting, the second He's sitting in a boat

(*A pause*)

ANDREI To my mind either to engage in a duel or to be present at one even in the capacity of doctor, is simply immoral

TCHEBUTYKIN That only seems so We are not here, there is nothing in the world, we don't exist but it only seems that we exist And isn't it all the same!

MASHA Just like that all day long they talk, talk. (*Going*) To live in such a climate, be afraid it will snow any minute, and still to have these conversations —(*Stopping*) I'm not going into the house, I can't When Vershinin comes let me know— (*She goes down the alley*) And the birds of passage are flying already (*Looking up*) Swans or geese My dear ones, my happy ones—! (*She goes out*)

ANDREI Our house will be empty The officers will go, you will go, my sister will be married, and I'll be left alone in the house.

TCHEBUTYKIN And your wife?

(FERAPONT *enters with some papers*)

ANDREI A wife is a wife She is honest decent, well-kind but along with all that there's something in her that reduces her to the level of some sort of petty, blind, coarse animal In any case, she's not a human

being I say this to you as to a friend the only man I can open my soul to I love Natasha it s true, but at times she seems to me amazingly vulgar and then I lose my wits I don t understand what for or why I love her so or at least did love

TCHEBUTYKIN [*Getting up*] Brother I m going away tomorrow we may never see each other again so here is my advice to you You know put on your hat take a walking stick in your hands and be off— Be off and go go without looking back And the farther you get the better

(SOLYONY *walks by at the rear of the stage with two officers seeing* TCHEBUTYKIN *he turns toward him the officers walk on*)

SOLYONY Doctor it s time! Half past twelve (*Greeting* ANDREI)

TCHEBUTYKIN Directly I ve had enough of you all (*To* ANDREI) If anybody asks for me Andrusha say that I— directly (*Sighing*) Oho-ho-ho—

SOLYONY (*Starting off with* TCHEBUTYKIN) Quick as a flash the bear made a dash— Why are you grunting old man?

TCHEBUTYKIN Get out!

SOLYONY How s your health?

TCHEBUTYKIN (*Angrily*) Smooth as butter

SOLYONY The old man is needlessly upset I'll indulge myself a little I ll only wing him like a snipe (*Takes out the perfume and sprinkles it on his hands*) There I ve poured a whole bottle out today and they still smell My hands smell of a corpse (*A pause*) So Do you remember the poem? And rebellious, he seeks the storm as if in storms were peace

TCHEBUTYKIN Yes Quick as a flash, the bear made a dash! (*He goes out with* SOLYONY)

(*Shouts are heard* Yoo hoo! ANDREI *and* FERAPONT *enter*)

FERAPONT The papers to sign

ANDREI (*Nervously*) Leave me alone! Leave me! I beg of you! (*He walks away with the baby carriage*)

FERAPONT But that s what papers are for, so they can be signed (*He goes to the rear of the stage*)

(*Enter* IRINA *and* TUSENBACH, TUSENBACH *in a straw hat* KULYGIN *crosses the stage calling* Ah-oo, Masha, Ah-oo)

TUSENBACH That seems to be the only man in town who s glad the officers are leaving

IRINA That s understandable (*A pause*) Our town will be empty now

TUSENBACH Dear, I ll come right back

IRINA Where are you going?

TUSENBACH I have to go to town, then to see my comrades off

IRINA It s not true Nikolai, why are you so distraught today? (*A pause*) What happened yesterday near the theatre?

TUSENBACH (*With an impatient gesture*) In an hour I ll be back and will be with you again (*Kissing her hand*) My beloved (*Looking into her face*) It s five years now I ve loved you and somehow I can t get used to it and you seem always more beautiful to me What lovely, wonderful hair! What eyes! I ll take you away tomorrow, we will work, we ll be rich my dreams will come true You shall be happy Only there is one thing one thing You don t love me.

IRINA That s not in my power! I ll be your wife faithful and ob dient but it s not love what is there to do! (*Crying*) I have never been in love—not once in my life Oh I ve dreamed so of love I ve dreamed of it a long time now day and night but my soul is like some fine piano that s locked and the key is lost (*A pause*) You have a restless look

TUSENBACH I haven t slept all night There is nothing in my life so terrible that it could frighten me and only that lost key tortures my soul—won t let me sleep Say something to me (*A pause*) Say something to me

IRINA What? What shall I say? What?

TUSENBACH Something

IRINA That s enough! That s enough!

(*A pause*)

TUSENBACH What nothings sometimes in life, what foolish trifles will take on meaning suddenly for no reason at all You laugh at them as you ve always done, you consider them nothings and yet you go on and feel that you haven t the strength to stop Oh let s not talk about that! I feel gay I see these firs maples birches now as if I were seeing th m for the first time and they are all looking at me curiously and waiting What beautiful trees and what a beautiful life there should be under them! (*A shout* Yoo hoo!) I must go It s time Th re s a tree that s dead but it still waves with the others in th wind So it s ems to me even if I die I ll still share in life somehow or other Good by my dearest (*Kissing her hands*) The papers you gave me are lying on my table under the calendar

IRINA But I m going with you

TUSENBACH (*Alarmed*) No no! (*Going quickly stopping in the alley*) Irina!

IRINA What?

TUSENBACH (*Not knowing what to say*) I didn t drink any coffee today Tell them, so that they ll make me some (*He goes quickly out*)

(IRINA *stands thinking then goes to the rear of the stage and sits down in the swing* ANDREI *comes in with the baby-carriage* FERAPONT *appears*)

FERAPONT But Andrei Sergeevich, the papers aren t mine, they are official I didn t think them up

ANDREI Oh, where is it, where is gone my past, when I was young and gay and clever when my dreams and thoughts were full of grace, and the present and future bright with hope? Why is it that when we have barely begun to live we grow dull gray, uninteresting lazy, indifferent useless, unhappy Our town has been in existence now for two hundred years a hundred thousand people living in it and there s not one who s not just like the others not one that s outstanding either in the past or in the presen , not one scholar, not one artist, not one who s even faintly remarkable and would arouse envy or any passionate desire to imitate him They just eat, drink, sleep and then die Others are born and they too, eat, drink, sleep and to keep from sinking into the torpor of boredom, vary their lives with foul gossip vodka cards chicanery and the wives deceive the husbands while the husbands lie, pretend not to see anything hear anything and an unavoidably banal influence weighs on the children and the divine spark dies in them and they become just as pitiful, identical corpses as their fathers and mothers were (*To* FERAPONT, *crossly*) What do you want?

FERAPONT Hey? Papers to sign

ANDREI I ve had enough of you

FERAPONT (*Handing over the paper*) Just now the door man from the State Chamber was saying It appears he says this winter in Petersburg there was a frost of two hundred degrees

ANDREI The present is hateful but on the other hand when I think of the future— Oh how good it is! I begin to feel so easy so free and in the distance a light dawns I see freedom I see how my children and I are freed from idleness from kvass from goose with cabbage from naps after dinner from despicable sloth

FERAPONT Two thousand people were frozen it appears The people, they say were horrified It was either in Petersburg or it was in Moscow—I can t remember

ANDREI (*Seized with a tender feeling*) My dear sisters, my wonderful sisters (*Tearfully*) Masha my sister

NATASHA (*In the window*) Who is it talking so loud out here? Is it you, Andrusha? You will wake up Sofie *Il ne fa it pas faire du bruit la Sofie est do mie déjà Vous etes un ours* (*Getting angry*) If you want to talk give the carriage and child to somebody else Ferapont take the carriage from your master

FERAPONT Yes ma am (*He takes the carriage*)

ANDREI (*Embarrassed*) I m speaking low

NATASHA (*Behind the window caressing her child*) Bobik! Mischievous Bobik! Naughty Bobik!

ANDREI (*Glancing through the papers*) Very well I ll look through them and sign what s necessary and you can take them back to the Board (*He goes into the house reading the papers* FERAPONT *pushes the baby-carriage toward the rear of the garden*)

NATASHA (*Behind the window*) Bobik what is your Ma

ma s name? Darlıng, darlıng! And who ıs thıs? Thıs ıs Aunt Olya Say to Auntıe How do you do, Olya!

(*Some wanderıng musıcıans a man and a gırl begın to play a vıolın and a harp* VERSHININ OLGA *and* ANFISA *emerge from the house and lısten quıetly for a moment* IRINA *joıns them*)

OLGA Our garden s lıke a lot openıng ınto several streets, they walk and drıve through ıt Nurse, gıve these musıcıans somethıng!

ANFISA (*Gıvıng money to the musıcıans*) Good by my dear souls! (*The musıcıans bow and go away*) Hard lıves they have! When you re full you don t play (*To* IRINA) Good mornıng Irısha! (*Kıssıng her*) M m m m, chıld how I lıve! How I lıve! At the hıgh school ın a Government apartment, wıth Olyushka—God has granted me that for my old age Not sınce I was born sınner that I am have I lıved so A large apartment, the Government s and a whole room for me and a lıttle bed All the Government s I wake up ın the nıght and—Oh Lord Mother of God, there s nobody happıer than I am

VERSHININ (*Lookıng at hıs watch*) We are goıng now Olga Sergeevna It s tıme (*A pause*) I wısh you everythıng everythıng Where s Marıa Sergeevna?

IRINA She s somewhere ın the garden I ll go look for her

VERSHININ Kındly, I m ın a hurry

ANFISA I ll go too, and look for her (*Callıng*) Mashenka. Ah oo-oo! (*Goıng away wıth* IRINA *to the rear of the garden*) Ah, oo-oo! Ah, oo-oo!

VERSHININ Everythıng has ıts end And here we are partıng (*Lookıng at hıs watch*) The town gave our company a sort of lunch, we drank champagne the Mayor made a speech I ate and lıstened but ın my heart I was

here with you all—(*Looking around the garden*) I've grown used to you

OLGA Are we ever to see each other again?

VERSHININ Most likely not (*A pause*) My wife and my two girls are leaving here in about two months please if anything happens if anything is needed

OLGA Yes yes of course Be sure of that (*A pause*) By tomorrow there won't be an officer in town it will all be a memory and for us of course a new life will begin (*A pause*) Everything turns out not as we'd like to have it I didn't want to be a head mistress and yet I became one Which means we are not to be in Moscow

VERSHININ Well Thank you for everything Forgive me if anything was not quite Much much too much I've talked—forgive me for that too don't bear me any grudge

OLGA (*Wiping her e es*) Now why doesn't Masha come

VERSHININ What else can I say to you as we part? What shall I philosophize abou ? (*Laughing*) Life is difficult It presents itself to many of us as blank and hopeless, and yet one must admit it gets always clearer and easier and the day is not far off apparently when it will be wholly bright (*Looking at his watch*) It's time for me to go it's time! Once humanity was occupied with wars filling its whole existence with marches invasions conquests whereas now all of that is outlived leaving behind it an enormous empty space which so far there is nothing to fill humanity is searching passionately and of course will find it Ah if only it were quicker! (*A p se*) You know if culture were added to industry a d

industry to culture (*Looking at his watch*) However, it's time for me.

OLGA There she comes

(MASHA *enters*)

VERSHININ I came to say good by

(OLGA *moves a little away so as not to disturb their farewell*)

MASHA (*Looking into his face*) Good-by (*A long kiss*)

OLGA Now, now

(MASHA *sobs violently*)

VERSHININ Write to me Don't forget me! Let me go it's time Olga Sergeevna take her I'm all ready—it's time late— (*Deeply moved he kisses* OLGA'S *hand then embraces* MASHA *again and goes quickly out*)

OLGA There, Masha! Stop, darling!

(KULYGIN *enters*)

KULYGIN (*Embarrassed*) No matter, let her cry, let her My good Masha, my kind Masha You are my wife and I am happy whatever happens I don't complain I don't make you a single reproach And here's Olga to witness We'll begin to live again as we used to, and I won't say one word to you not a breath

MASHA (*Stifling her sobs*) By the curved seashore a green oak, a golden chain upon that oak A golden chain upon that oak I'm going out of my mind By the curved seashore a green oak

OLGA Be calm, Masha Be calm Give her some water

MASHA I am not crying any more.

KULYGIN She is not crying now She s good

(A shot is heard faintly from a distance)

MASHA By the curved seashore a green oak a golden chain upon that oak The cat s green the oak s green I am mixing it up *(Taking a drink of water)* My life is a failure I don t want anything now I ll soon be calm It s all the same What does it mean By the curved seashore ? Why does this word keep running through my head? My thoughts are all mixed up

(IRINA *enters*)

OLGA Be calm Masha Now that s a good girl Let s go in

MASHA *(Angrily)* I m not going in there *(Sobbing but checking herself at once)* I don t go in the house any more so I won t do it now

IRINA Let s sit down together just quietly Well tomorrow I m going away

(A pause)

KULYGIN In the third grade yesterday I took this mustache and beard from a boy see— *(Putting on the mustache and beard)* I look like the German teacher *(Laughing)* Isn t that so? Funny these boys

MASHA Really you do look like your German

OLGA *(Laughing)* Yes

(MASHA *weeps*)

IRINA There Masha!

KULYGIN A lot like

(NATASHA *enters*)

NATASHA *(To the maid)* What? Protopopov will sit with Sofotchka Mikhail Ivanovich and let Andrei Sergeevich wheel Bobik There s so much bother

with children (*To* IRINA) Irina, you are going away tomorrow—it s such a pity! Stay at least another week (*Seeing* KULYGIN *she gives a shriek he laughs and takes off the mustache and beard*) Why, look at you, you scared me! (*To* IRINA) I am used to you and do you think parting with you will be easy for me? I ll give orders to put Andrei in your room with his violin—let him saw away there!—and in his room we ll put Sofotchka Marvelous, wonderful child! What a girl! Today she looked at me with such eyes, and— Mama!

KULYGIN Beautiful child, that s true

NATASHA And so tomorrow I ll be all alone here (*Sighing*) First of all, I ll give orders to chop down this alley of fir trees, then this maple here In the evening it looks so ugly (*To* IRINA) Dear that belt doesn t suit you at all It s in very poor taste You need something light And I ll order flowers planted, everywhere, flowers, and there ll be a fragrance (*Severely*) What s a fork doing here on the bench? (*She goes into the house to the maid*) What s a fork doing here on the bench I d like to know? (*Shouting*) Shut up!

KULYGIN She s off again!

(*Behind the scenes a band is playing a march everybody listens*)

OLGA They are leaving

(TCHEBUTYKIN *enters*)

MASHA Our friends are going Well then A pleasant journey to them! (*To her husband*) We must go home Where are my hat and cape?

KULYGIN I carried them in the house I ll get them right away

OLGA Yes now we can all go home It s time.

TCHEBUTYKIN Olga Sergeevna!

OLGA What? (*A pause*) What?

TCHEBUTYKIN Nothing Don t know how to tell you (*Whispering in her ear*)

OLGA (*Alarmed*) It s not possible!

TCHEBUTYKIN Yes What a story I m tired completely exhausted don t want to talk any more (*Irritably*) However it s all the same!

MASHA What happened?

OLGA (*Embracing* IRINA) It s a terrible day today I don t know how to tell you my darling

IRINA What? Say it quick What? For God s sake! (*Crying*)

TCHEBUTYKIN The Baron was killed just now in a duel

IRINA (*Weeping quietly*) I knew I knew

TCHEBUTYKIN (*Sitting down on a bench to the rear of the stage*) I m tired (*Taking a newspaper out of his pocket*) Let them cry a little (*Singing softly*) Ta ra ra boom de aye Sit on a curb I may

As if it weren t all the same!

(*The three sisters stand with their arms around one another*)

MASHA Oh how the music is playing! They are leaving us one has gone entirely entirely forever We'll be left alone to begin our life over again We must live We must live

IRINA (*Putting her head on* OLGA'S *breast*) The time will come when all will know why all this is what these sufferings are for there will be no secrets—but meanwhile we must live—must work only work! Tomorrow I m going away alone I ll teach in the school and give my whole life to those who need it

perhaps It s autumn now, winter will soon come and cover everything with snow, and I ll work work

OLGA (*Embracing both her sisters*) The music plays so gaily, bravely, and one wants to live Oh, Lord! Time will pass and we shall be gone forever they will forget us they will forget our faces voices and how many of us there were, but our sufferings will turn into joy for those who will be living after us happiness and peace will come on earth and they will remember with some gentle word those who live now and will bless them Oh, dear sisters our life isn t over yet We shall live! The music plays so gaily, so joyously, and it looks as if a little more and we shall know why we live, why we suffer If we only knew if we only knew!

(*The music plays always softer and softer* KULYGIN, *smiling and gay brings the hat and cape* ANDREI *is pushing the baby-carriage with Bobik in it*)

TCHEBUTYKIN (*Singing softly*) Ta ra ra boom de aye Sit on a curb I may (*Reading the newspaper*) It s all the same! It s all the same!

OLGA If we only knew if we only knew!

Curtain

The Cherry Orchard

CHARACTERS

RANEVSKAYA LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA *a landowner*

ANYA *her daughter seventeen years old*

VARYA *her adopted daughter twenty four years old*

GAYEFF LEONID ANDREEVICH *brother of Ranevskaya*

LOPAHIN YERMOLAY ALEXEEVICH *a merchant*

TROFIMOFF PYOTR SERGEEVICH *a student*

SEMYONOFF PISHTCHIK BORIS BORISOVICH *a landowner*

CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA *a governess*

EPIHODOFF SEMYON PANTELEEVICH *a clerk*

DUNYASHA *a maid*

FIERS *a valet an old man of eighty seven*

YASHA *a young valet*

A PASSERBY OR STRANGER.

THE STATIONMASTER.

A POST-OFFICE CLERK

Visitors Servants

The action takes place on the estate of L. A Ranevskaya

ACT ONE

A room that is still called the nursery One of the doors leads into ANYA S *room Dawn the sun will soon be rising It is May the cherry trees are in blossom but in the orchard it is cold with a morning frost The windows in the room are closed Enter* DUNYASHA *with a candle and* LOPAHIN *with a book in his hand*

LOPAHIN The train got in, thank God! What time is it?

DUNYASHA It s nearly two (*Blows out his candle*) It s already daylight

LOPAHIN But how late was the train? Two hours at least (*Yawning and stretching*) I m a fine one, I am, look what a fool thing I did! I drove her on purpose just to meet them at the station, and then all of a sudden I d overslept myself! Fell asleep in my chair How provoking!—You could have waked me up

DUNYASHA I thought you had gone. (*Listening*) Listen, I think they are coming now

LOPAHIN (*Listening*) No—No, there s the luggage and one thing and another (*A pause*) Lyuboff Andreevna has been living abroad five years I don t know what she is like now—She is a good woman An easy going simple woman I remember when I was a about fifteen, my father, who is at rest—in those

he ran a shop here in the village—hit me in the face with his fist my nose was bleeding—We d come to the yard together for something or other and he was a little drunk Lyuboff Andreevna I can see her now still so young so slim led me to the washbasin here in this very room in the nursery Don t cry she says little peasant it will be well in time for your wedding'—(*A pause*) Yes little peasant—My father was a peasant truly and here I am in a white waistcoat and yellow shoes Like a pig rooting in a pastry shop—I ve got this rich lots of money but if you really stop and think of it, I m just a peasant—(*Turning the pages of a book*) Here I was reading a book and didn t get a thing out of it. Reading and went to sleep (*A pause*)

DUNYASHA And all night long the dogs were not asleep they know their masters are coming

LOPAHIN What is it Dunyasha you re so—

DUNYASHA My hands are shaking I m going to faint

LOPAHIN You re just so delicate, Dunyasha And all dressed up like a lady and your hair all done up! Mustn t do that Must know your place

(*Enter* EPIHODOFF *with a bouquet he wears a jacket and highly polished boots with a loud squeak As he enters he drops the bouquet*)

EPIHODOFF (*Picking up the bouquet*) Look the gardener sent these he says to put them in the dining room

(*Giving the bouquet to* DUNYASHA)

LOPAHIN And bring me some kvass

DUNYASHA Yes sir (*Goes out*)

EPIHODOFF There is a morning frost now three degrees of frost (*Sighing*) and the cherries all in bloom I

cannot approve of our climate—I cannot Our climate can never quite rise to the occasion Listen, Yermolay Alexeevich, allow me to subtend, I bought myself, day before yesterday, some boots and they, I venture to assure you, squeak so that it is impossible What could I grease them with?

LOPAHIN Go on You annoy me

EPIHODOFF Every day some misfortune happens to me But I don t complain, I am used to it and I even smile

(DUNYASHA *enters serves* LOPAHIN *the kvass*)

EPIHODOFF I m going (*Stumbling over a chair and up setting it*) There (*As if triumphant*) there, you see, pardon the expression, a circumstance like that, among others—It is simply quite remarkable (*Goes out*)

DUNYASHA And I must tell you, Yermolay Alexeevich, that Epihodoff has proposed to me

LOPAHIN Ah!

DUNYASHA I don t know really what to—He is a quiet man but sometimes when he starts talking you can t understand a thing he means It s all very nice and full of feeling, but just doesn t make any sense I sort of like him He loves me madly He s a man that s unfortunate, every day there s something or other They tease him around here, call him twenty two misfortunes—

LOPAHIN (*Cocking his ear*) Listen, I think they are coming—

DUNYASHA They are coming! But what s the matter with me—I m cold all over

LOPAHIN They re really coming Let s go meet them Will she recognize me? It s five years we haven t seen each other

DUNYASHA (*Excitedly*) I m going to faint this very minute Ah I m going to faint!

(Two carriages can be heard driving up to the house LOPAHIN *and* DUNYASHA *hurry out The stage is empty In the adjoining rooms a noise begins* FIERS *hurries across the stage leaning on a stick he has been to meet* LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA *and wears an old fashioned livery and a high hat he mutters something to himself but you cannot understand a word of it The noise offstage gets louder and louder A voice Look! Let's go through here—* LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA ANYA *and* CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA *with a little dog on a chain all of them dressed for traveling* VARYA *in a coat and kerchief* GAYEFF SEMYONOFF PISHTCHIK LOPAHIN DUNYASHA *with a bundle and an umbrella servants with pieces of luggage—all pass through the room*)

ANYA Let s go through here Mama do you remember what room this is?

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA (*Happily through her tears*) The nursery!

VARYA How cold it is my hands are stiff (*To* LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA) Your rooms the white one and the violet are just the same as ever Mama

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA The nursery my dear beautiful room—I slept here when I was little— (*Crying*) And now I am like a child— (*Kisses her brother and* VARYA *then her brother again*) And Varya is just the same as ever looks like a nun And I knew Dunyasha— (*Kisses* DUNYASHA)

GAYEFF The train was two hours late How's that? How s that for good management?

CHARLOTTA (*To* PISHTCHIK) My dog he eats nuts too

PISHTCHIK (*Astonished*) Think of that!

(*Everybody goes out except* ANYA *and* DUNYASHA)

DUNYASHA We waited so long— (*Taking off* ANYA's *coat and hat*)

ANYA I didn't sleep all four nights on the way And now I feel so chilly

DUNYASHA It was Lent when you left there was some snow then there was frost and now? My darling (*Laughing and kissing her*), I waited so long for you, my joy, my life—I m telling you now, I can t keep from it another minute

ANYA (*Wearily*) There we go again—

DUNYASHA The clerk Epihodoff, proposed to me after Holy Week

ANYA You re always talking about the same thing— (*Arranging her hair*) I ve lost all my hairpins— (*She is tired to the point of staggering*)

DUNYASHA I just don t know what to think He loves me, loves me so!

ANYA (*Looks in through her door tenderly*) My room, my windows it s just as if I had never been away I m home! Tomorrow morning I ll get up, I ll run into the orchard— Oh, if I only could go to sleep! I haven t slept all the way I was tormented by anxiety

DUNYASHA Day before yesterday Pyotr Sergeevich arrived

ANYA (*Joyfully*) Petya!

DUNYASHA He s asleep in the bathhouse he lives there I am afraid he says of being in the way (*Taking her watch from her pocket and looking at it*) Somebody ought to wake him up It s only that Varvara Mikhailovna told us not to Don t you wake him up she said

VARYA (*Enter* VARYA *with a bunch of keys at her belt*) Dunyasha coffee quick—Mama is asking for coffee

DUNYASHA This minute (*Goes out*)

VARYA Well thank goodness you ve come back You are home again (*Caressingly*) My darling is back! My precious is back!

ANYA I ve had such a time

VARYA I can imagine!

ANYA I left during Holy Week it was cold then Charlotta talked all the way and did her tricks Why did you fasten Charlotta on to me—?

VARYA But you couldn t have traveled alone darling not at seventeen!

ANYA We arrived in Paris it was cold there and snowing I speak terrible French Mama lived on the fifth floor I went to see her there were some French people in her room ladies an old priest with his prayer book and the place was full of tobacco smoke—very dreary Suddenly I began to feel sorry for Mama so sorry I drew her to me held her close and couldn t let her go Then Mama kept hugging me crying—yes—

VARYA (*Tearfully*) Don t—oh don t—

ANYA Her villa near Mentone she had already sold she had no hing left nothing And I didn t have a kopeck left It was all we could do to get here And Mama doesn t understand! We sit down to dinner at a station and she orders insists on the most expensive things and gives the waiters rouble tips Charlotta does the same Yasha too demands his share it s simply dreadful Mama has her butler Yasha we ve brought him here—

VARYA I saw the wretch

ANYA Well how are things? Has the interest on the mortgage been paid?

VARYA How could we?

ANYA Oh, my God, my God—!

VARYA In August the estate is to be sold—

ANYA My God—!

LOPAHIN (*Looking in through the door and mooing like a cow*) Moo-o-o— (*Goes away*)

VARYA (*Tearfully*) I'd land him one like that— (*Shaking her fist*)

ANYA (*Embracing* VARYA *gently*) Varya, has he proposed? (VARYA *shakes her head*) But he loves you— Why don't you have it out with him, what are you waiting for?

VARYA I don't think anything will come of it for us. He is very busy, he hasn't any time for me—And doesn't notice me. God knows, it's painful for me to see him— Everybody talks about our marriage, everybody congratulates us, and the truth is, there's nothing to it—it's all like a dream— (*In a different tone*) You have a brooch looks like a bee.

ANYA (*Sadly*) Mama bought it. (*Going toward her room speaking gaily like a child*) And in Paris I went up in a balloon!

VARYA My darling is back! My precious is back! (DUNYASHA *has returned with the coffee pot and is making coffee.* VARYA *is standing by the door*) Darling, I'm busy all day long with the house and I go around thinking things. If only you could be married to a rich man, I'd be more at peace too, I would go all by myself to a hermitage—then to Kiev—to Moscow, and I'd keep going like that from one holy place to another—I would go on and on. Heavenly!

ANYA The birds are singing in the orchard. What time is it now?

VARYA It must be after two It s time you were asleep darling (*Going into* ANYA s *room*) Heavenly!

YASHA (YASHA *enters with a lap robe and a traveling bag Crossing the stage airily*) May I go through here?

DUNYASHA We d hardly recognize you Yasha you ve changed so abroad!

YASHA Hm— And who are you?

DUNYASHA When you left here I was like that— (*Her hand so high from the floor*) I m Dunyasha Fyodor Kozoyedoff's daughter You don t remember!

YASHA Hm— You little peach!

(*Looking around before he embraces her she shrieks and drops a saucer* YASHA *hurries out*)

VARYA (*At the door in a vexed tone*) And what s going on here?

DUNYASHA (*Tearfully*) I broke a saucer—

VARYA That s good luck

ANYA (*Emerging from her room*) We ought to tell Mama beforehand Petya is here—

VARYA I told them not to wake him up

ANYA (*Pensively*) Six years ago our father died a month later our brother Grisha was drowned in the river such a pretty little boy just seven Mama couldn t bear it, she went away went away without ever looking back— (*Shuddering*) How I understand her if she only knew I did (*A pause*) and Petya Trofimoff was Grisha s tutor he might remind—

FIERS (*Enter* FIERS *he is in a jacket and white waistcoat Going to the coffee urn busy with it*) The mistress will have her breakfast here— (*Putting on white gloves*) Is the coffee ready? (*To* DUNYASHA *sternly*) You! What about the cream?

DUNYASHA Oh my God— (*Hurrying out*)

FIERS (*Busy at the coffee urn*) Oh, you good for nothing—! (*Muttering to himself*) Come back from Paris— And the master used to go to Paris by coach— (*Laughing*)

VARYA Fiers, what are you—?

FIERS At your service (*Joyfully*) My mistress is back! It s what I ve been waiting for! Now I m ready to die— (*Crying for joy*)

(LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA, GAYEFF *and* SEMYONOFF PISHTCHIK *enter* SEMYONOFF PISHTCHIK *is in a podyovka of fine cloth and sharovary* GAYEFF *enters he makes gestures with his hands and body as if he were playing billiards*)

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA How is it? Let me remember— Yellow into the corner! Duplicate in the middle!

GAYEFF I cut into the corner Sister you and I slept here in this very room once, and now I am fifty-one years old, strange as that may seem—

LOPAHIN Yes time passes

GAYEFF What?

LOPAHIN Time, I say, passes

GAYEFF And it smells like patchouli here

ANYA I m going to bed Good night, Mama (*Kissing her mother*)

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA My sweet little child (*Kissing her hands*) You re glad you are home? I still can t get myself together

ANYA Good by Uncle

GAYEFF (*Kissing her face and hands*) God be with you How like your mother you are! (*To his sister*) Lyuba at her age you were exactly like her

(ANYA *shakes hands with* LOPAHIN *and* PISHTCHIK, *goes out and closes the door behind her*)

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA She s very tired

PISHTCHIK It is a long trip I imagine

VARYA (*To* LOPAHIN *and* PISHTCHIK) *Well then sirs? It s going on three o clock time for gentlemen to be going*

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA (*Laughing*) The same old Varya (*Drawing her to her and kissing her*) There I ll drink my coffee then we ll all go (FIERS *puts a small cushion under her feet*) Thank you my dear I am used to coffee Drink it day and night Thank you my dear old soul

(*Kissing* FIERS)

VARYA I ll go see if all the things have come (*Goes out*)

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Is it really me sitting here? (*Laughing*) I d like to jump around and wave my arms (*Covering her face with her hands*) But I may be dreaming! God knows I love my country love it deeply I couldn t look out of the car window I just kept crying (*Tearfully*) However I must drink my coffee Thank you Fiers thank you my dear old friend I m so glad you re still alive

FIERS Day before yesterday

GAYEFF He doesn t hear well

LOPAHIN And I must leave right now It s nearly five o clock in the morning for Kharkov What a nuisance! I wanted to look at you—talk— You are as beautiful as ever

PISHTCHIK (*Breathing heavily*) Even more beautiful— In your Paris clothes— It s a feast for the eyes—

LOPAHIN Your brother Leonid Andreevich here says I m a boor a peasant money grubber but that s all the same to me absolutely Let him say it All I wish is you d trust me as you used to and your wonderful

touching eyes would look at me as they did Merciful God! My father was a serf, belonged to your grand father and your father, but you, your own self, you did so much for me once that I ve forgotten all that and love you like my own kin—more than my kin

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA I can't sit still—I can t (*Jumping up and walking about in great excitement*) I ll never live through this happiness— Laugh at me, I m silly— My own little bookcase—! (*Kissing the bookcase*) My little table!

GAYEFF And in your absence the nurse here died

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA (*Sitting down and drinking cof fee*) Yes, may she rest in Heaven! They wrote me

GAYEFF And Anastasy died Cross eyed Petrushka left me and lives in town now at the police officer s (*Tak ing out of his pocket a box of hard candy and sucking a piece*)

PISHTCHIK My daughter, Dashenka—sends you her greetings—

LOPAHIN I want to tell you something very pleasant cheerful (*Glancing at his watch*) I m going right away There s no time for talking Well, I ll make it two or three words As you know, your cherry orchard is to be sold for your debts, the auction is set for August 22nd, but don t you worry, my dear you just sleep in peace, there s a way out of it Here s my plan Please lis ten to me Your estate is only thirteen miles from town They ve run the railroad by it Now if the cherry orchard and the land along the river were cut up into building lots and leased for summer cottages you d have at the very lowest twenty five thousand roubles per year income

GAYEFF Excuse me what rot!

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA I don t quite under ud you Yermolay Alexeevich

LOPAHIN At the very least you will get from the summer residents twenty five roubles per year for a two-and a half acre lot and if you post a notice right off I ll bet you anything that by autumn you won t have a single patch of land free everything will be taken In a word my congratulations you are saved The location is wonderful the river s so deep Except of course, it all needs to be tidied up cleared For instance let s say tear all the old buildings down and this house which is no good any more and cut down th e old cherry orchard—

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Cut down? My dear forgive me, you don t understand at all If there s one thing in the whole province that s interesting—not to say remarkable—it s our cherry orchard

LOPAHIN The only remarkable thing about this cherry orchard is that it s very big There s a crop of cherries once every two years and even th at s hard to get rid of Nobody buys them

GAYEFF This orchard is even mentioned in the encyclopedia

LOPAHIN (*Glancing at his watch*) If we don t cook up something and don t get somewhere the cherry orchard and the entire estate will be sold at auction on the twenty second of August Do get it settled then! I swear here is no other way out Not a one!

FIERS There was a time forty fifty years ago when the cherries were dried soaked pickled, cooked into jam and it used to be—

GAYEFF Keep quiet, Fiers

FIERS And it used to be that the dried cherries were shipped by the wagon load to Moscow and to Kharkov And the money there was! And the dried cherries were soft then juicy, sweet, fragrant— They had a way of treating them then—

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA And where is that way now?

FIERS They have forgotten it Nobody remembers it.

PISHTCHIK (*To* LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA) What's happening in Paris? How is everything? Did you eat frogs?

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA I ate crocodiles

PISHTCHIK Think of it—!

LOPAHIN Up to now in the country there have been only the gentry and the peasants, but now in summer the villa people too are coming in All the towns even the least big ones, are surrounded with cottages In about twenty years very likely the summer resident will multiply enormously He merely drinks tea on the porch now but it might well happen that on this two-and a half acre lot of his he'll go in for farming, and then your cherry orchard would be happy rich, splendid—

GAYEFF (*Getting hot*) What rot!

(*Enter* VARYA *and* YASHA)

VARYA Here, Mama Two telegrams for you (*Choosing a key and opening the old bookcase noisily*) Here they are

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA From Paris (*Tearing up the telegrams without reading them*) Paris that's all over—

GAYEFF Do you know how old this bookcase is Lyuba? A week ago I pulled out the bottom drawer and looked and there the figures were burned on it The bookcase

was made exactly a hundred years ago How s that? Eh? You might celebrate its jubilee It s an inanimate object but all the same be that as it may it s a bookcase

PISHTCHIK (*In astonishment*) A hundred years—! Think of it—!

GAYEFF Yes—quite something— (*Shaking the bookcase*) Dear honored bookcase! I saluted your existence which for more than a hundred years has been directed toward the clear ideals of goodness and justice your silent appeal to fruitful endeavor has not flagged in all the course of a hundred years sustaining (*Tearfully*) through the generations of our family our courage and our faith in a better future and nurturing in us ideals of goodness and of a social consciousness

(*A pause*)

LOPAHIN Yes

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA You re the same as ever Lenya

GAYEFF (*Slightly embarrassed*) Carom to the right into the corner pocket I cut into the side pocket!

LOPAHIN (*Glancing at his watch*) Well it s time for me to go

YASHA (*Handing medicine to* LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA) Perhaps you ll take the pills now—

PISHTCHIK You should never take medicaments dear madam— They do neither harm nor good— Hand them here dearest lady (*He takes the pillbox shakes the pills out into his palm blows on them puts them in his mouth and washes them down with kvass*) There! Now!

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA (*Startled*) Why you ve lost your mind!

PISHTCHIK I took all the pills

LOPAHIN Such a glutton!

(Everyone laughs)

FIERS The gentleman stayed with us during Holy Week, he ate half a bucket of pickles— *(Muttering)*

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA What is he muttering about?

VARYA He's been muttering like that for three years We're used to it

YASHA In his dotage

(CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA *in a white dress—she is very thin her corset laced very tight—with a lorgnette at her belt crosses the stage*)

LOPAHIN Excuse me, Charlotta Ivanovna, I haven't had a chance yet to welcome you *(Trying to kiss her hand)*

CHARLOTTA *(Drawing her hand away)* If I let you kiss my hand, 'twould be my elbow next, then my shoulder—

LOPAHIN No luck for me today *(Everyone laughs)* Charlotta Ivanovna show us a trick!

CHARLOTTA No I want to go to bed *(Exit)*

LOPAHIN In three weeks we shall see each other *(Kissing* LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA's *hand)* Till then good by It's time. *(To* GAYEFF) See you soon *(Kissing* PISHTCHIK) See you soon *(Shaking* VARYA's *hand then* FIERS *and* YASHA's) I don't feel like going *(To* LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA) If you think it over and make up your mind about the summer cottages, let me know and I'll arrange a loan of something like fifty thousand roubles Think it over seriously

VARYA *(Angrily)* Do go on, anyhow, will you!

LOPAHIN I'm going I'm going— *(Exit)*

GAYEFF Boor However, pardon—Varya is going to marry him, it's Varya's little fiancé

VARYA Don't talk too much Uncle.

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Well Varya I should be very glad He's a good man

PISHTCHIK A man one must say truthfully—A most worthy—And my Dashenka—says also that—she says all sorts of things— (*Snoring but immediately waking up*) Nevertheless dearest lady oblige me—With a loan of two hundred and forty roubles— Tomorrow the interest on my mortgage has got to be paid—

VARYA (*Startled*) There's not any money none at all

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Really I haven't got anything

PISHTCHIK I'll find it somehow (*Laughing*) I never give up hope There I think to myself all is lost I am ruined and lo and behold—a railroad is put through my land and—they paid me And then just watch something else will turn up—if not today then tomorrow—Dashenka will win two hundred thousand— She has a ticket

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA We've finished the coffee now we can go to bed

FIERS (*Brushing* GAYEFF'S *clothes reprovingly*) You put on the wrong trousers again What am I going to do with you!

VARYA (*Softly*) Anya is asleep (*Opening the window softly*) Already the sun's rising—it's not cold Look Mama! What beautiful trees! My Lord what air! The starlings are singing!

GAYEFF (*Opening another window*) The orchard is all white You haven't forgotten Lyuba? That long lane there runs straight—as a strap stretched out. It glistens on moonlight nights Do you remember? You haven't forgotten it?

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA (*Looking out of the window on to the

orchard) Oh, my childhood, my innocence! I slept in this nursery and looked out on the orchard from here, every morning happiness awoke with me, it was just as it is now, then, nothing has changed (*Laughing with joy*) All, all white! Oh, my orchard! After a dark, rainy autumn and cold winter, you are young again and full of happiness The heavenly angels have not deserted you— If I only could lift the weight from my breast, from my shoulders, if I could only forget my past!

GAYEFF Yes, and the orchard will be sold for debt, strange as that may seem

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Look, our dear mother is walking through the orchard—In a white dress! (*Laughing happily*) It's she

GAYEFF Where?

VARYA God be with you, Mama!

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA There s not anybody, it only seemed so To the right, as you turn to the summerhouse, a lit tle white tree is leaning there, looks like a woman— (*Enter* TROFIMOFF, *in a student's uniform well worn and glasses*) What a wonderful orchard! The white masses of blossoms the sky all blue

TROFIMOFF Lyuboff Andreevna! (*She looks around at him*) I will just greet you and go immediately (*Kiss ing her hand warmly*) I was told to wait until morning, but I hadn t the patience—

(LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA *looks at him puzzled*)

VARYA (*Tearfully*) This is Petya Trofimoff—

TROFIMOFF Petya Trofimoff, the former tutor of your Grisha— Have I really changed so?

(LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA *embraces him and crying quietly*)

GAYEFF (*Embarrassed*) There, there, Lyuba.

VARYA (*Crying*) I told you Petya, to wait till tomorrow

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA My Grisha—My boy—Grisha—Son—

VARYA What can we do Mama? It s God s will

TROFIMOFF (*In a low voice tearfully*) There there—

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA (*Weeping softly*) My boy was lost drowned— Why? Why my friend? (*More quietly*) Anya is asleep there and I am talking so loud—Making so much noise— But why Petya? Why have you lost your looks? Why do you look so much older?

TROFIMOFF A peasant woman on the train called me a mangy looking gentleman

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA You were a mere boy then a charming young student and now your hair s not very thick any more and you wear glasses Are you really a student still? (*Going to the door*)

TROFIMOFF Very likely I ll be a perennial student

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA (*Kissing her b other then* VARYA) Well go to bed— You ve grown older too Leonid

PISHTCHIK (*Following her*) So that s it we are going to bed now Oh my gout! I m staying here— I d like Lyuboff Andreevna my soul tomorrow morning— Two hundred and forty roubles—

GAYEFF He s still at it

PISHTCHIK Two hundred and forty roubles— To pay interest on the mortgage

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA I haven t any money my d ve

PISHTCHIK I ll pay it back my dear— It s a trifl n sum—

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Oh very well Leonid ill give— You give it to him Leonid

GAYEFF Oh, certainly, I'll give it to him Hold out your pockets

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA What can we do, give it, he needs it— He'll pay it back

(LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA, TROFIMOFF, PISHTCHIK *and* FIERS *go out* GAYEFF, VARYA *and* YASHA *remain*)

GAYEFF My sister hasn't yet lost her habit of throwing money away (*To* YASHA) Get away, my good fellow, you smell like hens

YASHA (*With a grin*) And you are just the same as you used to be, Leonid Andreevich

GAYEFF What? (*To* VARYA) What did he say?

VARYA (*To* YASHA) Your mother has come from the village, she's been sitting in the servants' hall ever since yesterday, she wants to see you—

YASHA The devil take her!

VARYA Ach shameless creature!

YASHA A lot I need her! She might have come tomorrow

(*Goes out*)

VARYA Mama is just the same as she was she hasn't changed at all If she could, she'd give away everything she has

GAYEFF Yes— If many remedies are prescribed for an illness you may know the illness is incurable I keep thinking I wrack my brains I have many remedies a great many, and that means really I haven't any at all It would be fine to inherit a fortune from somebody, it would be fine to marry off our Anya to a very rich man it would be fine to go to Yaroslavl and try our luck with our old aunt, the Countess Auntie is very, very rich

VARYA (*Crying*) If God would only help us!

GAYEFF Don t bawl! Auntie is very rich but she doesn t like us To begin with Sister married a lawyer not a nobleman— (ANYA *apears at the door*) Married not a nobleman and behaved herself you could say not very virtuously She is good kind nice I love her very much but no matter how much you allow for the extenuating circumstances you must admit she s a depraved woman You feel it in her slightest movement

VARYA (*Whispering*) Anya is standing in the door there

GAYEFF What? (*A pause*) It s amazing something got in my right eye I am beginning to see poorly And on Thursday when I was in the District Court—

(ANYA *enters*)

VARYA But why aren t you asleep Anya?

ANYA I don t feel like sleeping I can t

GAYEFF My little girl— (*Kissing* ANYA s *face and hands*) My child— (*Tearfully*) You are not my niece you are my angel you are everything to me Believe me believe—

ANYA I believe you Uncle Everybody loves you respects you— But dear Uncle you must keep quiet just keep quiet— What were you saying just now about my mother about your own sister? What did you say that for?

GAYEFF Yes yes— (*Putting her hand up over his face*) Really it s terrible! My God! Oh God save me! And today I made a speech to the bookcase— So silly! And it was only when I finished it that I could see it was silly

VARYA It s true Uncle you ought to keep quiet Just keep quiet That s all

ANYA If you kept quiet, you d have more peace

GAYEFF I ll keep quiet (*Kissing* ANYA s *and* VARYA s *hands*) I ll keep quiet Only this, it s about business On Thursday I was in the District Court, well, a few of us gathered around and a conversation began about this and that, about lots of things, apparently it will be possible to arrange a loan on a promissory note to pay the bank the interest due

VARYA If the Lord would only help us!

GAYEFF Tuesday I shall go and talk it over again (*To* VARYA) Don t bawl! (*To* ANYA) Your mother will talk to Lopahin, of course, he won t refuse her And as soon as you rest up, you will go to Yaroslavl to your great aunt, the Countess There that s how we will move from three directions, and the business is in the bag We ll pay the interest I am convinced of that— (*Putting a hard candy in his mouth*) On my honor I ll swear by anything you like that the estate shall not be sold! (*Excitedly*) By my happiness I swear! Here s my hand call me a worthless dishonorable man if I allow it to come up for auction! With all my soul I swear it!

ANYA (*A quieter mood returns to her she is happy*) How good you are, Uncle how clever! (*Embracing her uncle*) I feel easy now! I feel easy! I m happy!

FIERS (FIERS *enters reproachfully*) Leonid Andreevich, have you no fear of God! When are you going to bed?

GAYEFF Right away, right away You may go Fiers For this once I ll undress myself Well, children beddy bye— More details tomorrow and now, go to bed (*Kissing* ANYA *and* VARYA) I am a man of the eighties— It is a period that s not admired but I can

say nevertheless that I've suffered no little for my convictions in the course of my life It is not for nothing that the peasant loves me One must know the peasant! One must know from what—

ANYA Again Uncle!

VARYA You Uncle dear keep quiet

FIERS (*Angrily*) Leonid Andreevich!

GAYEFF I'm coming I'm coming— Go to bed A double bank into the side pocket! A clean shot—

(Goes out FIERS *hobbling after him)*

ANYA I feel easy now I don't feel like going to Yaroslavl I don't like Great aunt but still I feel easy Thanks to Uncle (*Sits down*)

VARYA I must get to sleep I'm going And there was unpleasantness here during your absence In the old servants quarters as you know live only the old servants Yephemushka Polya Yevstignay well and Karp They began to let every sort of creature spend the night with them—I didn't say anything But then I hear they've spread the rumor that I'd given orders to feed them nothing but beans Out of stinginess you see— And all that from Yevstignay— Very well I think to myself If that's the way it is I think to myself then you just wait I call in Yevstignay— (*Yawning*) He comes— How is it I say that you Yevstignay— You're such a fool— (*Glancing at* ANYA) Anitchka!—(*A pause*) Asleep! (*Takes* ANYA *by her arm*) Let's go to bed— Come on!— (*Leading her*) My little darling fell asleep! Come on— (*They go away beyond the orchard a shepherd is playing on a pipe* TROFIMOFF *walks across the stage and sees* VARYA *and* ANYA *stops*) Shh— She is asleep—asleep— Let's go dear

ANYA (*Softly half dreaming*) I m so tired— All the bells!—Uncle—dear— And Mama and Uncle—Varya

VARYA Come on, my dear, come on (*They go into* ANYA s *room*)

TROFIMOFF (*Tenderly*) My little sun! My spring!

Curtain

ACT TWO

A field An old chapel long abandoned with crooked walls near it a well big stones that apparently were once tombstones and an old bench A road to the estate of GAYEFF *can be seen On one side poplars rise casting their shadows the cherry orchard begins there In the distance a row of telegraph poles and far far away faintly traced on the horizon is a large town visible only in the clearest weather The sun will soon be down* CHARLOTTA, YASHA *and* DUNYASHA *are sitting on the bench* EPIHODOFF *is standing near and playing the guitar every one sits lost in thought* CHARLOTTA *wears an old peak cap* (fourrage), *she has taken a rifle from off her shoulders and is adjusting the buckle on the strap*

CHARLOTTA (*Pensively*) I have no proper passport I don t know how old I am—it always seems to me I m very young When I was a little girl my father and mother traveled from fair to fair and gave performances very good ones And I did *salto mortale* and

different tricks And when Papa and Mama died a German lady took me to live with her and began teaching me Good I grew up And became a governess But where I came from and who I am I dont know— Who my parents were perhaps they werent even married—I dont know (*Taking a cucumber out of her pocket and beginning to eat it*) I dont know a thing (*A pause*) I'd like so much to talk but theres not anybody I havent anybody

EPIHODOFF (*Playing the guitar and singing*) What care I for the noisy world what care I for friends and foes —How pleasant it is to play the mandolin!

DUNYASHA Thats a guitar not a mandolin (*Looking into a little mirror and powdering her face*)

EPIHODOFF For a madman who is in love this is a mandolin— (*Singing*) If only my heart were warm with the fire of requited love

(YASHA *sings with him*)

CHARLOTTA How dreadfully these people sing— Phooey! Like jackals

DUNYASHA (*To* YASHA) All the same what happiness to have been abroad

YASHA Yes of course I cannot disagree with you

(*Yawning and then lighting a cigar*)

EPIHODOFF Thats easily understood Abroad everything long since attained its complete development

YASHA Thats obvious

EPIHODOFF I am a cultured man I read all kinds of remarkable books but the trouble is I cannot discover my own inclinations whether to live or to shoot myself but nevertheless I always carry a revolver on me Here it is—(*Showing a revolver*)

CHARLOTTA Thats done Now I am going (*Slinging the*

rifle over her shoulder) You are a very clever man, Epihodoff, and a very terrible one, the women must love you madly Brrrr r r r! (*Going*) These clever people are all so silly, I haven't anybody to talk with I m always alone, alone, I have nobody and— Who I am, why I am, is unknown— (*Goes out without hurrying*)

EPIHODOFF Strictly speaking, not touching on other subjects, I must state about myself, in passing, that fate treats me mercilessly, as a storm does a small ship If, let us suppose, I am mistaken, then why, to mention one instance, do I wake up this morning, look and there on my chest is a spider of terrific size — There, like that (*Showing the size with both hands*) And also I take some kvass to drink and in it I find something in the highest degree indecent, such as a cockroach (*A pause*) Have you read Buckle? (*A pause*) I desire to trouble you, Avdotya Feodorovna, with a couple of words

DUNYASHA Speak

EPIHODOFF I have a desire to speak with you alone— (*Sighing*)

DUNYASHA (*Embarrassed*) Very well— But bring me my cape first—by the cupboard— It s rather damp here—

EPIHODOFF Very well—I ll fetch it— Now I know what I should do with my revolver—(*Takes the guitar and goes out playing*)

YASHA Twenty two misfortunes! Between us he s a stupid man, it must be said (*Yawning*)

DUNYASHA God forbid he should shoot himself (*A pause*) I ve grown so uneasy, I m always fretting I was only a girl when I was taken into the master s

house and now I ve lost the habit of simple living—and here are my hands white white as a lady s I ve become so delicate fragile ladylike afraid of every thing—Frightfully so And Yasha if you deceive me I don t know what will happen to my nerves

YASHA (*Kissing her*) You little cucumber! Of course every girl must behave properly What I dislike above everything is for a girl to conduct herself badly

DUNYASHA I have come to love you passionately you are educated you can discuss anything (*A pause*)

YASHA (*Yawning*) Yes sir—To my mind it is like this If a girl loves someone it means she is immoral (*A pause*) It is pleasant to smoke a cigar in the clear air —(*Listening*) They are coming here— It is the ladies and gentlemen—

(DUNYASHA *impulsively embraces him*)

YASHA Go to the house as though you had been to bathe in the river go by this path otherwise, they might meet you and suspect me of making a rendezvous with you That I cannot tolerate

DUNYASHA (*With a little cough*) Your cigar has given me the headache (*Goes out*)

(YASHA *remains sitting near the chapel* LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA GAYEFF *and* LOPAHIN *enter*)

LOPAHIN We must decide definitely time doesn t wait Why the matter s quite simple Are you willing to lease your land for summer cottages or are you not? Answer in one word yes or no? Just one word!

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Who is it smokes those disgusting cigars out here—? (*Sitting down*)

GAYEFF The railroad running so near is a great convenience (*Sitting down*) We made a trip to town and lunched there— Yellow in the side pocket! Per

haps I should go in the house first and play one game—

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA You'll have time.

LOPAHIN Just one word! (*Imploringly*) Do give me your answer!

GAYEFF (*Yawning*) What?

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA (*Looking in her purse*) Yesterday there was lots of money in it. Today there's very little. My poor Varya! For the sake of economy she feeds everybody milk soup and in the kitchen the old people get nothing but beans, and here I spend money—senselessly— (*Dropping her purse and scattering gold coins*) There they go scattering! (*She is vexed.*)

YASHA Allow me, I'll pick them up in a second. (*Picking up the coins*)

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA If you will, Yasha. And why did I go in town for lunch—? Your restaurant with its music is trashy, the tablecloths smell of soap— Why drink so much, Lyonya? Why eat so much? Why talk so much? Today in the restaurant you were talking a lot again, and all of it beside the point. About the seventies, about the decadents. And to whom? Talking to waiters about the decadents!

LOPAHIN Yes.

GAYEFF (*Waving his hand*) I am incorrigible, that's evident— (*To* YASHA *irritably*) What is it —You are forever swirling around in front of us?

YASHA (*Laughing*) I cannot hear your voice without laughing.

GAYEFF (*To his sister*) Either I or he—

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Go away, Yasha. Go on—

YASHA (*Giving* LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA *her purse*) I am

going right away (*Barely suppressing his laughter*) This minute (*Goes out*)

LOPAHIN The rich Deriganoff intends to buy your es tate They say he is coming personally to the auction

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA And where did you hear that?

LOPAHIN In town they are saying it

GAYEFF Our Yaroslavl aunt promised to s nd us some thing but when and how much she will s nd nobody knows—

LOPAHIN How much will she send? A hundred thou sand T vo hundred?

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Well—maybe ten fifteen thousand —we d be thankful for that

LOPAHIN Ex use me but such light minde l people as you are such odd unbusinesslike people I never saw You are told in plain Russian that your estate is being sold up and you just don t seem to tak e it in

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA But what are ve to do? Tell us what?

LOPAHIN I tell you every day Every day I tell you the same thing Both the cherry orchard and the land have got to be leased for summer cottages it has to be done right no v quick— The auction is right under you noses Do understand! On e you fin lly decide that there are to be summer co tages y u will get all the money you want and then you ll be saved

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Summ r cottages and summer residents—it is so trivial excuse me

GAYEFF I absolu ely agree with you

LOPAHIN I ll ei her burst out crying or scream or fa nt I can t bear it! You are torturing me! (*To* GAYEFF) You re a perfect old woman!

GAYEFF What?

LOPAHIN A perfect old woman! (*About to go*)

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA (*Alarmed*) No, don t go, stay, my lamb, I beg you Perhaps we will think of something!

LOPAHIN What is there to think about?

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Don t go I beg you With you here it is more cheerful anyhow— (*A pause*) I keep waiting for something, as if the house were about to tumble down on our heads

GAYEFF (*Deep in thought*) Double into the corner pocket— Bank into the wide pocket—

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA We have sinned so much—

LOPAHIN What sins have you—?

GAYEFF (*Puts a hard candy into his mouth*) They say I ve eaten my fortune up in hard candies— (*Laughing*)

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Oh, my sins—I ve always thrown money around like mad, recklessly and I married a man who accumulated nothing but debts My husband died from champagne—he drank fearfully—and to my misfortune I fell in love with another man I lived with him, and just at that time—it was my first punishment—a blow over the head right here in the river my boy was drowned and I went abroad—went away for good never to return never to see this river again—I shut my eyes ran away beside myself and he after me—mercilessly, brutally I bought a villa near Mentone, because he fell ill there, and for three years I knew no rest day or night the sick man exhausted me my soul dried up And last year when the villa was sold for debts I went to Paris and there he robbed me of everything threw me over, took up with another woman, I tried to poison myself—so

stupid so shameful— And suddenly I was seized with longing for Russia for my own country for my little girl— (*Wiping away her tears*) Lord Lord have mercy forgive me my sins! Don t punish me any more! (*Getting a telegram out of her pocket*) I got this today from Paris he asks forgiveness begs me to return— (*Tears up the telegram*) That sounds like music somewhere

(*Listening*)

GAYEFF It is our famous Jewish orchestra You remember four violins a flute and double bass

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Does it still exist? We ought to get hold of it sometime and give a party

LOPAHIN (*Listening*) Can t hear it— (*Singing softly*) And for money the Germans will frenchify a Russian (*Laughing*) What a play I saw yesterday at the theatre very funny!

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA And most likely there was nothing funny about it You shouldn t look at plays but look oftener at yourselves How gray all your lives are what a lot of idle things you say!

LOPAHIN That s true It must be said frankly this life of ours is idiotic— (*A pause*) My father was a peasant an idiot he understood n thing he taught me nothing he just beat me in his drunken fits and always with a stick At bottom I am just as big a dolt and idiot as he was I wasn t taught anything my hand writing is vile I write like a pig—I am ashamed for people to see it

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA You ought to get married my friend

LOPAHIN Yes—That s true

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA To our Varya, perhaps She is a good girl

LOPAHIN Yes

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA She comes from simple people, and she works all day long, but the main thing is she loves you And you, too, have liked her a long time

LOPAHIN Why not? I am not against it— She's a good girl (*A pause*)

GAYEFF They are offering me a position in a bank Six thousand a year— Have you heard that?

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Not you! You stay where you are—

FIERS (FIERS *enters bringing an overcoat To* GAYEFF) Pray, Sir, put this on, it's damp

GAYEFF (*Putting on the overcoat*) You're a pest, old man

FIERS That's all right— This morning you went off without letting me know (*Looking him over*)

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA How old you've grown, Fiers!

FIERS At your service

LOPAHIN She says you've grown very old!

FIERS I've lived a long time They were planning to marry me off before your papa was born (*Laughing*) And at the time the serfs were freed I was already the head footman I didn't want to be freed then I stayed with the masters—(*A pause*) And I remember everybody was happy, but what they were happy about they didn't know themselves

LOPAHIN In the old days it was fine At least they flogged

FIERS (*Not hearing*) But of course The peasants stuck to the masters, the masters stuck to the peasants and

now everything is all smashed up you can t tell about anything

GAYEFF Keep still Fiers Tomorrow I must go to town They have promised to introduce me to a certain *general who might* make us a loan

LOPAHIN Nothing will come of it. And you can rest assured you won t pay the interest

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA *He s just raving on There aren t* any such generals

(TROFIMOFF ANYA *and* VARYA *enter*)

GAYEFF Here they come

ANYA There is Mama sitting there

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA (*Tenderly*) Come come—My darlings—(*Embracing* ANYA *and* VARYA) If you only knew how I love you both! Come sit by me—there—like that.

(*Everybody sits down*)

LOPAHIN Our perennial student is always strolling with the young ladies

TROFIMOFF It s none of your business

LOPAHIN He will soon be fifty and he s still a student.

TROFIMOFF *Stop your stupid jokes*

LOPAHIN But why are you so peevish you queer duck?

TROFIMOFF Don t you pester me

LOPAHIN (*Laughing*) Permit me to ask you what do you make of me?

TROFIMOFF Yermolay Alexeevich I make this of you you are a rich man you ll soon be a millionaire Just as it is in the metabolism of nature, a wild beast is needed to eat up everything that comes *his way so* you too are needed

(*Everyone laughs*)

VARYA Petya, you d better tell us about the planets

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA No, let's go on with yesterday's conversation.

TROFIMOFF What was it about?

GAYEFF About the proud man

TROFIMOFF We talked a long time yesterday, but didn't get anywhere In a proud man, in your sense of the word, there is something mystical Maybe you are right, from your standpoint, but if we are to discuss it in simple terms, without whimsy, then what pride can there be, is there any sense in it, if man physiologically is poorly constructed if in the great majority he is crude, unintelligent, profoundly miserable One must stop admiring oneself One must only work

GAYEFF All the same you will die

TROFIMOFF Who knows? And what does it mean—you will die? Man may have a hundred senses, and when he dies only the five that are known to us may perish, and the remaining ninety five go on living

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA How clever you are, Petya!

LOPAHIN (*Ironically*) Terribly!

TROFIMOFF Humanity goes forward, perfecting its powers Everything that's unattainable now will some day become familiar, understandable it is only that one must work and must help with all one's might those who seek the truth With us in Russia so far only a very few work The great majority of the intelligentsia that I know are looking for nothing doing nothing and as yet have no capacity for work They call themselves intelligentsia, are free and easy with the servants, treat the peasants like animals educate themselves poorly, read nothing seriously, do absolutely nothing, about science they just talk and about art they understand very little Every one of

them is serious all have stern faces they all talk of nothing but important things philosophize and all the time everybody can see that the workmen eat abominably sleep without any pillows thirty or forty to a room and everywhere there are bedbugs stench dampness moral uncleanness— And apparently with us all the fine talk is only to divert the attention of ourselves and of others Show me where we have the day nurseries they are always talking so much about where are the reading rooms? They only write of these in novels for the truth is there are not any at all. There is only filth vulgarity orientalism— I am afraid of very serious faces and dislike them I'm afraid of serious conversations Rather than that let's just keep still

LOPAHIN You know I get up before five o'clock in the morning and work from morning till night Well I always have money my own and other people's on hand and I see what the people around me are One has only to start doing something to find out how few honest and decent people there are At times when I can't go to sleep I think Lord thou gavest us immense forests unbounded fields and the widest horizons and living in the midst of them we should indeed be giants—

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA You feel the need for giants— They are good only in fairy tales anywhere else they only frighten us

(At the back of the stage EPIHODOFF *passes by playing the guitar)*

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA *(Lost in thought)* Epihodoff is coming—

ANYA (*Lost in thought*) Epihodoff is coming

GAYEFF The sun has set, ladies and gentlemen

TROFIMOFF Yes

GAYEFF (*Not loud and as if he were declaiming*) Oh, Nature wonderful, you gleam with eternal radiance, beautiful and indifferent, you whom we call Mother, combine in yourself both life and death, you give life and you take it away

VARYA (*Beseechingly*) Uncle!

ANYA Uncle you're doing it again!

TROFIMOFF You'd better bank the yellow into the side pocket

GAYEFF I'll be quiet, quiet

(*All sit absorbed in their thoughts There is only the silence* FIERS *is heard muttering to himself softly Suddenly a distant sound is heard as if from the sky like the sound of a snapped string dying away mournful*)

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA What's that?

LOPAHIN I don't know Somewhere far off in a mine shaft a bucket fell But somewhere very far off

GAYEFF And it may be some bird—like a heron

TROFIMOFF Or an owl—

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA (*Shivering*) It's unpleasant, somehow (*A pause*)

FIERS Before the disaster it was like that The owl hooted and the samovar hummed without stopping, both

GAYEFF Before what disaster?

FIERS Before the emancipation

(*A pause*)

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA You know my friends let's go Twilight is falling (*To* ANYA) You have tears in

your eyes— What is it my dear little girl? (*Embracing her*)

ANYA It s just that Mama It s nothing

TROFIMOFF Somebody is coming

(*A* STRANGER *appears in a shabby white cap and an overcoat he is a little drunk*)

THE STRANGER Allow me to ask you can I go straight through here to the station?

GAYEFF You can Go by that road

THE STRANGER I am heartily grateful to you (*Coughing*) The weather is splendid— (*Declaiming*) Brother of mine suffering brother— Go out to the Volga whose moans— (*To* VARYA) Mademoiselle grant a hungry Russian man some thirty kopecks—

(VARYA *is frightened and gives a shriek*)

LOPAHIN (*Angrily*) There s a limit to everything

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA (*Flustered*) Take this— Here s this for you— (*Searching in her purse*) No silver— It s all the same here s a gold piece for you—

THE STRANGER I am heartily grateful to you (*Goes out Laughter*)

VARYA (*Frightened*) I m going—I m g ing— Oh Mama you poor little Mama! There s nothing in the house for people to eat and you gave him a gold piece

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA What is to be done with me so silly? I shall give you all I have in the house Yermolay Alexeevich you will lend me some this once more!—

LOPAHIN Agreed

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Lets go ladies and gentlemen it s time And here Varya we ha e definitely made a match for you I congratulate you

VARYA (*Through her tears*) Mama, that s not some thing to joke about

LOPAHIN Achmelia, get thee to a nunnery

GAYEFF And my hands are trembling, it is a long time since I have played billiards

LOPAHIN Achmelia, Oh nymph, in thine orisons be all my sins remember d—

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Let s go, my dear friends it will soon be suppertime

VARYA He frightened me My heart is thumping so!

LOPAHIN I remind you, ladies and gentlemen August 22nd the cherry orchard will be auctioned off Think about that!—Think!—

(*All go out except* TROFIMOFF *and* ANYA)

ANYA (*Laughing*) My thanks to the stranger he fright ened Varya, now we are alone

TROFIMOFF Varya is afraid we might begin to love each other and all day long she won t leave us to our selves With her narrow mind she cannot understand that we are above love To sidestep the petty and illu sory, which prevent our being free and happy that is the aim and meaning of our life Forward! We march on irresistibly toward the bright star that burns there in the distance Forward! Do not fall behind friends!

ANYA (*Extending her arms upward*) How well you talk! (*A pause*) It s wonderful here today!

TROFIMOFF Yes the weather is marvelous

ANYA What have you done to me Petya why don t I love the cherry orchard any longer the way I used to? I loved it so tenderly it seemed to me there was not a better place on earth than our orchard

TROFIMOFF All Russia is our orchard The earth is im mense and beautiful and on it are many wonderful

places (*A pause*) Just think Anya your grandfather great grandfather and all your ancestors were slave owners *in possession of living souls* and can you doubt that from every cherry in the orchard from every leaf from e ery trunk human beings are looking at you can it be that you don t hear their voices? To possess living souls well that depraved all of you who lived before and who are living no v so that your mother and you and your uncle no longer notice that you live by debt at somebody else s expense at the expense of those very people whom you wouldn t let past your front door— We are at least *two hundred years behind the times* e have as yet absolutely nothing we have no definite attitude toward the past we only philosophize complain of our sadness or drink vodka Why it is quite clear that to begin to live in the present we must first atone for our past must be done with it and we can atone for it only through suffering only through uncommon incessant labor Understand that Anya

ANYA The house v e live in ceased to be ours long ago and I ll go away I give you my v ord

TROFI IOFF If you ha e th household keys thro v them in the v ell and go a ay Be free as the v ind

ANYA (*Transported*) How well you said that!

TROFI IOFF Believe me Anya belie e me! I am not thirty yet I am young I am still a stu lent but I have already borne so much! Every winter I am hun ry sick anxious poor as a beggar and— vl ere has destiny not chased me where ha en t I been! And yet my soul has always every minute day and n ght been full of inexplicable premonitions I have a premonition of happiness Anya I see it already—

ANYA (*Pensively*) The moon is rising

(EPIHODOFF *is heard playing on the guitar always the same sad song The moon rises Somewhere near the poplars* VARYA *is looking for* ANYA *and calling Anya! Where are you?*)

TROFIMOFF Yes, the moon is rising (*A pause*) Here is happiness, here it comes, comes always nearer and nearer, I hear its footsteps now And if we shall not see it, shall not come to know it, what does that matter? Others will see it!

VARYA (*Off*) Anya! Where are you?

TROFIMOFF Again, that Varya! (*Angrily*) It s scandalous!

ANYA Well, let s go to the river It s lovely there

TROFIMOFF Let s go (*They go out*)

VARYA (*Off*) Anya! Anya!

Curtain

ACT THREE

The drawing room separated by an arch from the ballroom A chandelier is lighted A Jewish orchestra is playing—the same that was mentioned in Act Two Evening In the ballroom they are dancing grand rond *The voice of* SEMYONOFF PISHTCHIK *Promenade à une paire! They enter the drawing room in the first couple are* PISHTCHIK *and* CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA *in the second* TROFIMOFF *and* LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA *in the third* ANYA *with the* POST OFFICE CLERK, *in the fourth* VARYA *with the* STATION

MASTER, et cetera—VARYA is crying softly and wipes away her tears while she is dancing DUNYASHA is in the last couple through the drawing room PISHTCHIK shouts Grand rond balance ! and Les Cavaliers à genoux et remerciez vos dames!

FIERS in a frock coat goes by with seltzer water on a tray PISHTCHIK and TROFIMOFF come into the drawing room

PISHTCHIK I am full blooded I have had two strokes already and dancing is hard for me but as they say if you are in a pack of dogs, you may bark and bark but you must still wag your tail. At that I have the health of a horse My dear father—he was a great joker—may be dwell in Heaven—used to talk as if our ancient line the Semyonoff Pishtchiks were descended from the very horse that Caligula made a Senator—(*Sitting down*) But heres my trouble I havent any money A hungry dog believes in nothing but meat—(*Snoring but waking at once*) And the same way with me—I cant talk about anything but money

TROFIMOFF Well to tell you the truth there is something of a horse about your figure

PISHTCHIK Well—a horse is a fine animal— You can sell a horse—

(*The sound of playing billiards comes from the next room VARYA appears under the arch to the ballroom*)

TROFIMOFF (*Teasing*) Madam Lopahin! Madam Lopahin!

VARYA (*Angrily*) A mangy looking gentleman!

TROFIMOFF Yes, I am a mangy looking gentleman and proud of it!

VARYA (*In bitter thought*) Here we have gone and

hired musicians and what are we going to pay them with?

(*Goes out*)

TROFIMOFF (*To* PISHTCHIK) If the energy you have wasted in the course of your life trying to find money to pay the interest had gone into something else, you could very likely have turned the world upside down before you were done with it

PISHTCHIK Nietzsche—the philosopher—the greatest—the most celebrated—a man of tremendous mind—says in his works that one may make counterfeit money

TROFIMOFF And have you read Nietzsche?

PISHTCHIK Well—Dashenka told me And I'm in such a state now that I could make counterfeit money my self— Day after tomorrow three hundred and ten roubles must be paid—one hundred and thirty I've on hand— (*Feeling in his pockets alarmed*) The money is gone! I have lost the money! (*Tearfully*) Where is the money? (*Joyfully*) Here it is, inside the lining—I was in quite a sweat—

(LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA *and* CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA *come in*)

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA (*Humming lazginka a Georgian dance*) Why does Leonid take so long What's he doing in town? (*To* DUNYASHA) Dunyasha, offer the musicians some tea—

TROFIMOFF In all probability the auction did not take place

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA And the musicians came at an unfortunate moment and we planned the ball at an unfortunate moment— Well it doesn't matter (*Sits down and singing softly*)

CHARLOTTA (*Gives* PISHTCHIK *a deck of cards*) Here is a deck of cards for you think of some one card

PISHTCHIK I have thought of one

CHARLOTTA Now shuffle the deck Very good Hand it here oh my dear Monsieur Pishtchik *Ein zwei drei!* Now look for it it's in your coat pocket—

PISHTCHIK (*Getting a card out of his coat pocket*) The eight of spades that's absolutely right! (*Amazed*) Fancy that!

CHARLOTTA (*Holding a deck of cards in her palm to* TROFIMOFF) Tell me quick now which card is on top?

TROFIMOFF What is it? Well—the Queen of Spades

CHARLOTTA Right! (*To* PISHTCHIK) Well? Which card's on top?

PISHTCHIK The Ace of Hearts

CHARLOTTA Right! (*Strikes the deck against her palm the deck of cards disappears*) And what beautiful weather we are having today!

> (*A mysterious feminine voice answers her as if from under the floor Oh yes The weather is splendid madame You are so nice you're my ideal— The voice Madame you too please me greatly*)

THE STATIONMASTER (*Applauding*) Madam Ventriloquist bravo!

PISHTCHIK (*Amazed*) Fancy that! Most charming Charlotta Ivanovna—I am simply in love with you

CHARLOTTA In love? (*Shrugging her shoulders*) Is it possible that you can love? *Guter mensch aber schlechter musikant*

TROFIMOFF (*Slapping* PISHTCHIK *on the shoulder*) You horse you—

CHARLOTTA I beg your attention, one more trick (*Taking a lap robe from the chair*) Here is a very fine lap robe—I want to sell it— (*Shaking it out*) Wouldn't somebody like to buy it?

PISHTCHIK (*Amazed*) Fancy that!

CHARLOTTA *Ein zwei drei!*

(*She quickly raises the lowered robe behind it stands* ANYA, *who curtseys runs to her mother embraces her and runs back into the ballroom amid the general delight*)

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA (*Applauding*) Bravo, bravo—!

CHARLOTTA Now again! *Ein zwei drei!*

(*Lifting the robe behind it stands* VARYA, *she bows*)

PISHTCHIK (*Amazed*) Fancy that!

CHARLOTTA That's all (*Throwing the robe at* PISHTCHIK, *curtseying and running into the ballroom*)

PISHTCHIK (*Hurrying after her*) You little rascal—What a girl! What a girl! (*Goes out*)

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA And Leonid is not here yet What he's doing in town so long I don't understand! Everything is finished there either the estate is sold by now or the auction didn't take place Why keep it from us so long

VARYA (*Trying to comfort her*) Uncle has bought it, I am sure of that

TROFIMOFF (*Mockingly*) Yes

VARYA Great aunt sent him power of attorney to buy it in her name and transfer the debt She did this for Anya And I feel certain God willing that Uncle will buy it

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Our Yaroslavl great aunt has sent fifteen thousand to buy the estate in her name—

doesn t trust us but that wouldn t be enough to pay the interest even— (*Covering her face with her hands*) Today my fate will be decided my fate—

TROFIMOFF (*Teasing* VARYA) Madam Lopahin!

VARYA (*Angrily*) Perennial student! You have already been expelled from the University twice

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA But why are you angry Varya? He teases you about Lopahin what of it? Marry Lopahin if you want to he is a good man interesting If you don t want to don t marry him darling nobody is making you do it

VARYA I look at this matter seriously Mama one must speak straight out He s a good man I like him

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Then marry him What there is to wait for I don t understand!

VARYA But I can t propose to him myself Mama It s two years now everyone has been talking to me about him everyone talks and he either remains silent or jokes I understand He s getting rich he s busy with his own affairs and has no time for me If there were money ever so little even a hundred roubles I would drop everything and go far away I d go to a nunnery

TROFIMOFF How saintly!

VARYA (*To* TROFIMOFF) A student should be intelligent! (*In a low voice tearfully*) How homely you have grown, Petya how old you ve got (*To* LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA *no longer crying*) It is just that I can t live without working Mama I must be doing something every minute

YASHA (YASHA *enters Barely restraining his laughter*) Epihodoff has broken a billiard cue!— (*Goes out*)

VARYA But why is Epihodoff here? Who allowed him

to play billiards? I don't understand these people— (*Goes out*)

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Don't tease her, Petya, you can see she has troubles enough without that

TROFIMOFF She is just too zealous Sticking her nose into things that are none of her business All summer she gave us no peace, neither me nor Anya, she was afraid a romance would spring up between us What business is that of hers? And besides I haven't shown any signs of it I am so remote from triviality We are above love!

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Well, then, I must be beneath love (*Very anxiously*) Why isn't Leonid here? Just to tell us whether the estate is sold or not? Calamity seems to me so incredible that I don't know what to think I'm lost—I could scream this minute—I could do something insane Save me Petya Say something do say

TROFIMOFF Whether the estate is sold today or is not sold—is it not the same? There is no turning back the path is all grown over Calm yourself my dear all that was over long ago One mustn't deceive oneself one must for once at least in one's life look truth straight in the eye

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA What truth? You see where the truth is and where the untruth is but as for me it's as if I had lost my sight I see nothing You boldly decide all important questions, but tell me my dear boy isn't that because you are young and haven't had time yet to suffer through any one of your problems You look boldly ahead and isn't that because you don't see and don't expect anything terrible since life is still hidden from your young eyes? You are

braver more honest more profound than we are but stop and think be magnanimous have a little mercy on me just a little Why I was born here My father and mother lived here and my grandfather I love this house I can't imagine my life without the cherry orchard and if it is very necessary to sell it then sell me along with the orchard— (*Embracing* TROFIMOFF *and kissing him on the forehead*) Why my son was drowned here—(*Crying*) Have mercy on me good kind man

TROFIMOFF You know I sympathize with you from the bottom of my heart

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA But that should be *said differently differently—(Taking out her handkerchief a telegram falls on the floor) My heart is heavy today you can't imagine how heavy It is too noisy for me here my soul trembles at every sound I tremble all over and yet I can't go off to myself when I am alone the silence frightens me* Don't blame m Petya—I love you as one of my own I should gladly have gi en you Anya's hand I assure you only my dear you must study and finish your course You do n thing Fate simply flings you about from place to place and that's so strange— Isn't that so? Yes? And you must do something about your beard to make it grow somehow— (*Laughing*) You look funny!

TROFIMOFF (*Picking up the telegram*) I do not desire to be beautiful

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA This telegram is from Paris I get one every day Yesterday and today too That wild man has fallen ill again somethin is wron [illegible] with h m— He asks forgiveness begs me to come and really I ought to make a trip to *Paris and s ay*

awhile near him Your face looks stern, Petya, but what is there to do, my dear, what am I to do, he is ill, he is alone, unhappy and who will look after him there, who will keep him from doing the wrong thing, who will give him his medicine on time? And what is there to hide or keep still about? I love him, that's plain I love him, love him— It's a stone about my neck, I'm sinking to the bottom with it, but I love that stone and live without it I cannot (*Pressing* TROFIMOFF'S *hand*) Don't think harshly of me, Petya, don't say anything to me, don't—

TROFIMOFF (*Tearfully*) Forgive my frankness, for God's sake! Why, he picked your bones

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA No, no, no, you must not talk like that (*Stopping her ears*)

TROFIMOFF But he is a scoundrel, only you, you are the only one that doesn't know it. He is a petty scoundrel a nonentity—

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA (*Angry but controlling herself*) You are twenty six years old or twenty seven, but you are still a schoolboy in the second grade!

TROFIMOFF Very well!

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA You should be a man—at your age you should understand people who love. And you yourself should love someone—you should fall in love! (*Angrily*) Yes yes! And there is no purity in you, you are simply smug a ridiculous crank a freak—

TROFIMOFF (*Horrified*) What is she saying!

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA I am above love! You are not above love Petya you are as our Fiers would say, just a good for nothing Imagine, at your age, not having a mistress—!

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Why do you look like that? Aren t you well? You know you ought to go to bed—

FIERS Yes—(*With a sr er*) I go to bed and without me who s going to serve who ll take care of things? I m the only one in the whole house

YASHA (*To* LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA) Lyuboff Andreevna let me ask a favor of you do be so kind! If you ever go back to Paris take me with you please do! It s im possible for me to stay here (*Looking around him and speaking in a lo voice*) Why talk about it? You can see for yourself it s an uncivilized country an im moral people and not only that there s the boredom *of it The food they give us in that kitchen is* abomi nable and there s that Fiers too walking about and muttering all kinds of words that are out of place Take me with you be so kind!

PISHTCHIK (PISHTCHIK *enters*) Allow me to ask you— for a little waltz most beautiful lady— (LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA *goes with him*) Charming lady I must borrow a hundred and eighty roubles from you— will borrow— (*Dancing*) a hundred and eighty rou bles— (*They pass into the ballroom*)

YASHA (*Singing lou*) Wilt thou know the unrest in my soul!

> (*In the ballroom a figu e in a gray top hat and checked trousers wa es both hands and ju mps about there a e shou ts of Bra o Cha lotta Ivan ovna!*)

DUNYASHA (*Stopping to pou der her face*) The young lady orders me to dance—there are a lot of gentlemen and very fe la lies—but dancing makes my head swim and my heart thump Fiers Nikolaevich the

post-office clerk said something to me just now that took my breath away

(The music plays more softly)

FIERS What did he say to you?

DUNYASHA You are like a flower, he says

YASHA *(Yawning)* What ignorance—! *(Goes out)*

DUNYASHA Like a flower—I am such a sensitive girl I love tender words awfully

FIERS You ll be getting your head turned

(EPIHODOFF *enters*)

EPIHODOFF Avdotya Feodorovna, you don t want to see me— It s as if I were some sort of insect *(Sighing)* Ach life!

DUNYASHA What do you want?

EPIHODOFF Undoubtedly you may be right *(Sighing)* But of course, if one considers it from a given point of view then you I will allow myself so to express it forgive my frankness absolutely led me into a state of mind I know my fate, every day some misfortune happens to me but I have long since become accustomed to that and so I look on my misfortunes with a smile You gave me your word and, although I—

DUNYASHA I beg you, we ll talk later on but leave me now in peace I m in a dream now *(Playing with her fan)*

EPIHODOFF I have a something wrong happens every day—I will allow myself so to express it—I just smile I even laugh

VARYA (VARYA *enters from the ballroom*) You are not gone yet Semyon? What a really disrespectful man you are! *(To* DUNYASHA*)* Get out of here, Dunyasha *(To* EPIHODOFF*)* You either play billiards and b

a cue or you walk about the drawing room like a guest

EPIHODOFF Allow me to tell you you cannot make any demands on me

VARYA I m not making any demands on you I m talking to you All you know is to walk from place to place but not do any work We keep a clerk but what for nobody knows

EPIHODOFF (*Offended*) Whether I work whether I walk whether I eat or whether I play billiards are matters to be discussed only by people of understanding and my seniors

VARYA You dare to say that to me! (*Flying into a temper*) You dare? So I don t understand anything? Get out of here! This minute!

EPIHODOFF (*Alarmed*) I beg you to express yourself in a delicate manner

VARYA (*Beside herself*) This very minute get out of here! Get out! (*He goes to the door she follows him*) Twenty two misfortunes! Don t you dare breathe in here! Don t let me set eyes on you! (EPIHODOFF *has gone out but his voice comes from outside the doo I shall complain about you*) Ah you are coming back? (*G bbing the stick that* FIERS *put by the doo*) Come on come—come on I ll show you— Ah you are coming? You are coming? Take that th n—!

(*She swings the stick at the very moment when* LOPAHIN *is coming in*)

LOPAHIN Most humbly I thank you

VARYA (*Angrily and ironically*) I beg your pardon!

LOPAHIN It s nothing at all I humbly thank you for the pleasant treat

VARYA It isn't worth your thanks (*Moving away then looking back and asking gently*) I haven't hurt you?

LOPAHIN No, it's nothing There's a great bump coming though

(*Voices in the ballroom Lopahin has come back Yermolay Alexeevich!*)

PISHTCHIK (*Enters*) See what we see hear what we hear—! (*He and* LOPAHIN *kiss one another*) You smell slightly of cognac my dear my good old chap And we are amusing ourselves here too

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA (LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA *enters*) Is that you Yermolay Alexeevich? Why were you so long? Where is Leonid?

LOPAHIN Leonid Andreevich got back when I did he's coming

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA (*Agitated*) Well what? Was there an auction? Do speak!

LOPAHIN (*Embarrassed afraid of showing the joy he feels*) The auction was over by four o'clock— We were late for the train had to wait till half past nine (*Sighing heavily*) Ugh my head's swimming a bit!

(GAYEFF *enters with his right hand he carries his purchases with his left he wipes away his tears*)

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Lyonya, what Lyonya eh (*Impatiently with tears in her eyes*) Quick for God's sake—

GAYEFF (*Not answering her merely waving his hand to* FIRS *crying*) Here, take it— There are anchovies some Kertch herrings— I haven't eaten anything all day— What I have suffered! (*The door into the billiard room is open you hear the balls clicking and* YASHA'S *voice Seven and eighteen!* GAYEFF'S *expression changes he is no longer crying*) I'm ...

tired You help me change, Fiers (*Goes to his room through the ballroom* FIERS *behind him*)

PISHTCHIK What happened at the auction? Go on tell us!

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Is the cherry orchard sold?

LOPAHIN It s sold

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Who bought it?

LOPAHIN I bought it (*A pause* LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA *is over come She would have fallen had she not been standing near the chair and table* VARYA *takes the keys from her belt throws them on the floo in the middle of the drawing room and goes out*) I bought it Kindly wait a moment, ladies and gentlemen everything is muddled up in my head I can t speak— (*Laughing*) We arrived at the auction Deriganoff was already there Leonid Andreevich had only fifteen thousand and Deriganoff right off bids thirty over and above indebtedness I see how things are I match him with forty thousand He forty five I fifty five That is to say he raises it by fives I by tens— So it ended Over and above the indebtedness I bid up to ninety thousand it was knocked down to me The cherry orchard is mine now Mine! (*Guffawing*) My God Lord the cherry orchard is mine! Tell me I m drunk out of my head that I m imagining all this— (*Stamps his feet*) Don t laugh at me! If only my father and grandfather could rise from their graves and see this whole business see how their Yermolay beaten half illiterate Yermolay who used to run around barefoot in winter how that very Yermolay has bought an estate that nothing in the world can beat. I bought the estate where grandfather and father were slaves where you wouldn t even let

me in the kitchen I am asleep it's only some dream of mine it only seems so to me— That's nothing but the fruit of your imagination, covered with the darkness of the unknown— (*Picking up the keys with a gentle smile*) She threw down the keys wants to show she is not mistress any more— (*Jingling the keys*) Well it's all the same (*The orchestra is heard tuning up*) Hey musicians play I want to hear you! Come on everybody and see how Yermolay Lopahin will swing the ax in the cherry orchard how the trees will fall to the ground! We are going to build villas and our grandsons and great grandsons will see a new life here— Music play! (*The music is playing* LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA *has sunk into a chair crying bitterly* LOPAHIN *reproachfully*) Why then didn't you listen to me? My poor dear it can't be undone now (*With tears*) Oh if this could all be over soon if somehow our awkward unhappy life would be changed!

PISHTCHIK (*Taking him by the arm in a low voice*) She is crying Come on in the ballroom let her be by herself— Come on— (*Taking him by the arm and leading him into the ballroom*)

LOPAHIN What's the matter Music, there play up! (*Sarcastically*) Everything is to be as I want it! Here comes the new squire the owner of the cherry orchard (*Quite accidentally he bumps into the little table and very nearly upsets the candelabra*) I can pay for everything!

(*Goes out with* PISHTCHIK *There is nobody left either in the ballroom or the drawing room but* LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA *who sits all huddled up and crying bitterly The music plays softly* ANYA *and* TROFIMOFF *enter hurriedly* ANYA *comes up to her*

mother and kneels in front of her TROFIMOFF *remains at the ballroom door*)

ANYA Mama—! Mama you are crying? My dear kind good Mama my beautiful I love you—I bless you The cherry orchard is sold it s not ours any more that s true true but don t cry Mama, you ve your life still left you you ve your good pure heart ahead of you— Come with me come on darling away from here come on— We will plant a new orchard finer than this one you ll see it you ll understand and joy quiet deep joy will sink into your heart like the sun at evening and you ll smile Mama! Come, darling come on!

Curtain

ACT FOUR

The same setting as in Act One There are neither curtains on the windows nor are there any pictures on the walls Only a little furniture remains piled up in one corner as if for sale A sense of emptiness is felt Near the outer door at the rear of the stage is a pile of suitcases traveling bags and so on The door on the left is open and through it VARYA'S *and* ANYA'S *voices are heard* LOPAHIN *is standing waiting* YASHA *is holding a tray with glasses of champagne In the hall* EPIHODOFF *is tying up a box offstage at the rear there is a hum It is the peasants who have come to say good-by* GAYEFF'S *voice Thanks brothers thank you*

YASHA The simple folk have come to say good by I am of the opinion, Yermolay Alexeevich, that the people are kind enough but don t understand anything

(*The hum subsides* LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA *enters through the hall with* GAYEFF, *she is not crying but is pale her face quivers she is not able to speak*)

GAYEFF You gave them your purse Lyuba Mustn t do that! Mustn t do that!

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA I couldn t help it! I couldn t help it!

(*Both go out*)

LOPAHIN (*Calling through the door after them*) Please, I humbly beg you! A little glass at parting I didn t think to bring some from town and at the station I found just one bottle Please! (*A pause*) Well, then, ladies and gentlemen! You don t want it? (*Moving away from the door*) If I d known that I wouldn t have bought it Well then I won t drink any either (YASHA *carefully sets the tray down on a chair*) At least, you have some, Yasha

YASHA To those who are departing! Pleasant days to those who stay behind! (*Drinking*) This champagne is not the real stuff I can assure you

LOPAHIN Eight roubles a bottle (*A pause*) It s devilish cold in here

YASHA They didn t heat up today, we are leaving any way (*Laughing*)

LOPAHIN What are you laughing about?

YASHA For joy

LOPAHIN Outside it s October, but it s sunny and still like summer Good for building (*Looking at his watch then through the door*) Ladies and gentlemen bear in mind we have forty six minutes in all till

time! Which means you have to go to the station in twenty minutes Hurry up a little

TROFIMOFF (*In an overcoat entering from outside*) Seems to me it is time to go The carriages are ready The devil knows where my rubbers are They ve disappeared (*In the door*) Anya my rubbers are not here! I can t find them

LOPAHIN And I have to go to Harkoff I m going on the same train with you I m going to live in Harkoff all winter I ve been dilly-dallying along with you I m tired of doing nothing I can t be without work look I don t know what to do with my hands here see they are dangling somehow as if they didn t be long to me

TROFIMOFF We are leaving right away and you ll set about your useful labors again

LOPAHIN Here drink a glass

TROFIMOFF I shan t

LOPAHIN It s to Moscow now?

TROFIMOFF Yes I ll see them off to town and tomorrow to Moscow

LOPAHIN Yes— Maybe the professors are not giving their lectures I imagine they are waiting till you arrive

TROFIMOFF That s none of your business

LOPAHIN How many years is it you ve been studying at the University?

TROFIMOFF Think of something newer This is old and flat (*Looking for his rubbers*) You know perhaps we shall not see each other again therefore permit me to give you one piece of advice at parting! Don t wave your arms! Cure yourself of that habit—of arm waving And also of building summer cottages figur

ing that the summer residents will in time become individual landowners figuring like that is arm waving too— Just the same however, I like you You have delicate soft fingers like an artist you have a delicate soft heart—

LOPAHIN (*Embracing him*) Good by, my dear boy Thanks for everything If you need it, take some money from me for the trip

TROFIMOFF Why should I? There's no need for it.

LOPAHIN But you haven't any!

TROFIMOFF I have Thank you I got some for a translation Here it is in my pocket (*Anxiously*) But my rubbers are gone

VARYA (*From another room*) Take your nasty things! (*Throws a pair of rubbers on to the stage*)

TROFIMOFF But what are you angry about Varya Hm— Why, these are not my rubbers

LOPAHIN In the spring I planted twenty seven hundred acres of poppies and now I've made forty thousand clear And when my poppies were in bloom what a picture it was! So look as I say I've made forty thousand which means I'm offering you a loan because I can afford to Why turn up your nose I'm a peasant —I speak straight out

TROFIMOFF Your father was a peasant mine—an apothecary—and from that absolutely nothing follows (LOPAHIN *takes out his wallet*) Leave it alone leave it alone— If you gave me two hundred thousand even I wouldn't take it I am a free man And everything that you all value so highly and dearly both rich man and beggars has not the slightest power over me it's like a mere feather floating in the air I can get along without you I can pass you by I

am strong and proud Humanity is moving toward the loftiest truth toward the loftiest happiness that is possible on earth and I am in the front ranks

LOPAHIN Will you get there?

TROFIMOFF I ll get there (*A pause*) I ll get there or I ll show the others the way to get there

(In the distance is heard the sound of an ax on a tree)

LOPAHIN Well good by my dear boy It s time to go We turn up our noses at one another but life keeps on passing When I work a long time without stopping my thoughts are clearer and it seems as if I too know what I exist for and brother how many people are there in Russia who exist nobody knows for what! Well all the same it s not that that keeps things circulating Leonid Andreevich they say has accepted a position—he ll be in a bank six thousand a year—the only thing is he won t stay there he s very lazy—

ANYA (*In the doorway*) Mama begs of you until she s gone not to cut down the orchard

TROFIMOFF Honestly haven t you enough tact to— (*Goes out through the hall*)

LOPAHIN Right away right away— What people really!

(Goes out after him)

ANYA H s Fers been sent to the hospital?

YASHA I told them to this morning They must have sent him

ANYA (*To* EPIHODOFF *who is passing through the room*) Semyon Panteleevich please inquire whether or not they have taken Fiers to the hospital

YASHA (*Huffily*) This morning I told Igor. Why ask ten times over!

EPIHODOFF The venerable Fiers, according to my conclusive opinion, is not worth mending; he ought to join his forefathers. And I can only envy him. (*Putting a suitcase on a hatbox and crushing it.*) Well, there you are, of course I knew it. (*Goes out.*)

YASHA (*Mockingly*) Twenty two misfortunes—

VARYA (*On the other side of the door*) Have they taken Fiers to the hospital?

ANYA They have.

VARYA Then why didn't they take the letter to the doctor?

ANYA We must send it on after them— (*Goes out.*)

VARYA (*From the next room*) Where is Yasha? Tell him his mother has come, she wants to say good by to him.

YASHA (*Waving his hand*) They merely try my patience. (DUNYASHA *has been busying herself with the luggage; now when* YASHA *is left alone she goes up to him.*)

DUNYASHA If you'd only look at me once, Yasha. You are going away—leaving me— (*Crying and throwing herself on his neck.*)

YASHA Why are you crying? (*Drinking champagne.*) In six days I'll be in Paris again. Tomorrow we will board the express train and dash off out of sight; somehow I can't believe it. *Vive la France!* It doesn't suit me here—I can't live here— Can't help that. I've seen enough ignorance—enough for me. (*Drinking champagne.*) Why do you cry? Behave yourself properly, then you won't be crying.

DUNYASHA (*Powdering her face looking into a small mirror*) Send me a letter from Paris I loved you Yasha you know loved you so! I am a tender creature Yasha!

YASHA They are coming here (*Bustling about near the suitcases humming low*)

(LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA GAYEFF ANYA *and* CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA *enter*)

GAYEFF We should be going There is very little time left (*Looking at* YASHA) Who is it smells like herring!

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA In about ten minutes let s be in the carriage— (*Glancing around the room*) Good by dear house old Grandfather Winter will pass spring will be here but you won t be here any longer they ll tear you down How much these walls have seen! (*Kissing her daughter warmly*) My treasure you are beaming your eyes are dancing like two diamonds Are you happy? Very?

ANYA Very! It s the beginning of a new life Mama!

GAYEFF (*Gaily*) Yes indeed everything is fine now Before the sale of the cherry orchard we all were troubled distressed and then when the question was settled definitely irrevocably we all calmed down and were even cheerful— I m a bank official I am a financier now— Yellow ball into the side pocket any way Lyuba you look better no doubt about that

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Yes My nerves are better that s true (*They hand her her hat and coat*) I sleep well Carry out my things Yasha It s time (*To* ANYA) My little girl we shall see each other again soon— I am going to Paris I shall live there on the money your Yaroslavl great aunt sent for the purchase of the estate

—long live Great aunt! But that money won t last long

ANYA Mama, you ll come back soon, soon— Isn t that so? I ll prepare myself, pass the examination at high school and then I ll work I will help you We ll read all sorts of books together Mama, isn t that so? (*Kissing her mother s hands*) We ll read in the autumn evenings, read lots of books, and a new, wonderful world will open up before us— (*Daydreaming*) Mama, do come—

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA I ll come, my precious (*Embracing her daughter*)

(LOPAHIN *enters with* CHARLOTTA *who is softly humming a song*)

GAYEFF Lucky Charlotta she s singing!

CHARLOTTA (*Taking a bundle that looks like a baby wrapped up*) My baby bye bye— (*A baby s cry is heard Ooah ooah—!*) Hush my darling my dear little boy (*Ooah ooah—!*) I am so sorry for you! (*Throwing the bundle back*) Will you please find me a position? I cannot go on like this

LOPAHIN We will find something Charlotta Ivanovna don t worry

GAYEFF Everybody is dropping us Varya is going away —All of a sudden we are not needed

CHARLOTTA I have no place in town to live I must go away (*Humming*) It s all the same—

(PISHTCHIK *enters*)

LOPAHIN The freak of nature—!

PISHTCHIK (*Out of breath*) Ugh let me catch my breath—I m exhausted— My honored friends— Give me some water—

GAYEFF After money I suppose? This humble servant will flee from sin! (*Goes out*)

PISHTCHIK It's a long time since I was here— Most beautiful lady— (*To* LOPAHIN) You here—? Glad to see you—a man of the greatest intellect— Here— Take it— (*Giving* LOPAHIN *some money*) Four hundred roubles— That leaves eight hundred and forty I still owe you—

LOPAHIN (*With astonishment shrugging his shoulders*) I must be dreaming But where did you get it?

PISHTCHIK Wait—I'm hot— Most extraordinary event Some Englishmen came and found on my land some kind of white clay— (*To* LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA) And four hundred for you—Beautiful lady—Wonderful lady— (*Handing over the money*) The rest later (*Taking a drink of water*) Just now a young man was saying on the train that some great philosopher recommends jumping off roofs— Jump! he says and therein lies the whole problem (*With astonishment*) You don't say! Water!

LOPAHIN And what Englishmen were they?

PISHTCHIK I leased them the parcel of land with the clay for twenty four years— And now excuse me, I haven't time—I must run along—I'm going to Znoykoff's—To Kardamonoff's— I owe everybody— (*Drinking*) I wish you well—I'll drop in on Thursday—

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA We are moving to town right away and tomorrow I'm going abroad—

PISHTCHIK What? (*Alarmed*) Why to town? That's why I see furniture—Suitcases— Well no matter— (*Tearfully*) No matter— Men of the greatest minds —those Englishmen— No matter— Good luck! God

will help you— No matter— Everything in this world comes to an end—(*Kissing* LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA'S *hand*) And should the report reach you that my end has come, think of that well known horse and say: There was once on earth a so and so— Semyonoff Pishtchik— The kingdom of Heaven be his. Most remarkable weather—yes— (*Going out greatly disconcerted but immediately returning and speaking from the door*) Dashenka sends her greetings!

(*Goes out.*)

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA And now we can go. I am leaving with two worries. First, that Fiers is sick. (*Glancing at her watch*) We still have five minutes—

ANYA Mama, Fiers has already been sent to the hospital. Yasha sent him off this morning.

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA My second worry—is Varya. She is used to getting up early and working, and now without any work she is like a fish out of water. She has grown thin, pale and cries all the time, poor thing— (*A pause*) You know this, Yermolay Alexeevich. I dreamed—of marrying her to you. And there was every sign of your getting married. (*Whispering to* ANYA, *who beckons to* CHARLOTTA, *both go out*) She loves you, you are fond of her, and I don't know, don't know why it is you seem to avoid each other—I don't understand it!

LOPAHIN I don't understand it either, I must confess. It's all strange somehow— If there's still time, I am ready right now even— Let's finish it up—and *basta*, but without you I feel I won't propose.

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA But that's excellent. Surely it takes only a minute. I'll call her at once.

LOPAHIN And to fit the occasion there s the champagne (*Looking at the glasses*) Empty somebody has already drunk them (YASHA *coughs*) That s what s called lapping it up—

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA (*Vivaciously*) Splendid! We ll go out— Yasha *allez!* I ll call her— (*Through the door*) Varya drop everything and come here Come on! (*Goes out with* YASHA)

LOPAHIN (*Looking at his watch*) Yes—

(*A pause Behind the door you hear smothered laughter whispering finally* VARYA *enters*)

VARYA (*Looking at the luggage a long time*) That s strange I just can t find it—

LOPAHIN What are you looking for?

VARYA I packed it myself and don t remember where (*A pause*)

LOPAHIN Where do you expect to go now Varvara Mikhailovna?

VARYA I? To Regulin s I agreed to go there to look after the house— As a sort of housekeeper

LOPAHIN That s in Yashnevo? It s nigh on to seventy miles (*A pause*) And here ends life in this house—

VARYA (*Examining the luggage*) But where is it? Either I put it in the trunk perhaps— Yes life in this house is ended—it won t be any more—

LOPAHIN And I am going to Harkoff now—By the next train I ve a lot to do And I am leaving Epihodoff— on the ground here—I ve hired him

VARYA Well!

LOPAHIN Last year at this time it had already been snowing if you remember and now it s quiet it s sunny It s only that it s cold about three degrees of frost

VARYA I haven't noticed (*A pause*) And besides our thermometer is broken— (*A pause A voice from the yard through the door*) Yermolay Alexeevich—

LOPAHIN (*As if he had been expecting this call for a long time*) This minute! (*Goes out quickly*)

(VARYA, *sitting on the floor putting her head on a bundle of clothes sobs quietly The door opens* LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA *enters cautiously*)

VARYA (*She is not crying any longer and has wiped her eyes*) Yes, it's time, Mama I can get to Regulin's today, if we are just not too late for the train— (*Through the door*) Anya, put your things on! (ANYA *then* GAYEFF *and* CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA *enter* GAYEFF *has on a warm overcoat with a hood The servants gather also the drivers* EPIHODOFF *busies him self with the luggage*) Now we can be on our way

ANYA (*Joyfully*) On our way!

GAYEFF My friends my dear kind friends! Leaving this house forever can I remain silent can I restrain myself from expressing as we say farewell, those feelings that fill now my whole being—

ANYA (*Beseechingly*) Uncle!

VARYA Dear Uncle, don't!

GAYEFF (*Dejectedly*) Bank the yellow into the side pocket— I am silent—

(TROFIMOFF *and then* LOPAHIN *enter*)

TROFIMOFF Well ladies and gentlemen it's time to go!

LOPAHIN Epihodoff my coat!

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA I'll sit here just a minute more It's as if I had never seen before what the walls in this house are like what kind of ceilings and now I look at them greedily with such tender love—

GAYEFF I remember when I was six years old on Trin

ity Day I sat in this window and watched my father going to Church—

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Are all the things taken out?

LOPAHIN Everything I think (*Putting on his overcoat To* EPIHODOFF) Epihodoff you see that everything is in order

EPIHODOFF (*Talking in a hoarse voice*) Dont worry Yermolay Alexeevich!

LOPAHIN Why is your voice like that?

EPIHODOFF Just drank some water swallowed some thing

YASHA (*With contempt*) The ignorance—

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA We are going and there wont be a soul left here—

LOPAHIN Till spring

VARYA (*She pulls an umbrella out from a bundle it looks as if she were going to hit someone* LOPAHIN *pretends to be frightened*) What do you what do you— I never thought of it

TROFIMOFF Ladies and gentlemen lets get in the car riages— Its time! The train is coming any minute

VARYA Petya here they are your rubbers by the suit case (*Tearfully*) And how dirty yours are how old—!

TROFIMOFF (*Putting on the rubbers*) Lets go ladies and gentlemen!

GAYEFF (*Greatly embarrassed afraid he will cry*) The train— The station— Cross into the side combination off the white into the corner—

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Lets go!

LOPAHIN Everybody here? Nobody there? (*Locking the side door on the left*) Things are stored here it must be locked up lets go!

ANYA Good by, house! Good by, the old life!

TROFIMOFF Long live the new life!

(Goes out with ANYA. VARYA *casts a glance around the room and without hurrying goes out.* YASHA *and* CHARLOTTA, *with her dog, go out.)*

LOPAHIN And so till spring. Out, ladies and gentlemen— Till we meet. *(Goes out.)*

(LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA *and* GAYEFF *are left alone. As if they had been waiting for this they throw themselves on one another's necks sobbing, but smothering their sobs as if afraid of being heard.)*

GAYEFF *(In despair)* Oh, Sister, Sister—

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA Oh my dear, my lovely, beautiful orchard! My life, my youth, my happiness, good by!

ANYA (ANYA'S *voice gaily appealingly)* Mama—!

TROFIMOFF (TROFIMOFF'S *voice gaily excitedly)* Aaooch!

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA For the last time just to look at the walls, at the window— My dear mother used to love to walk around in this room—

GAYEFF Oh Sister, Sister—!

ANYA (ANYA'S *voice)* Mama—!

TROFIMOFF (TROFIMOFF'S *voice)* Aaooch—!

LYUBOFF ANDREEVNA We are coming! *(They go out.)*

(The stage is empty. You hear the keys locking all the doors, then the carriages drive off. It grows quiet. In the silence you hear the dull thud of an ax on a tree, a lonely, mournful sound. Footsteps are heard. From the door on the right FIRS *appears. He is dressed as usual in a jacket and a white waistcoat, slippers on his feet. He is sick.)*

FIRS *(Going to the door and trying the knob)* Locked. They've gone. *(Sitting down on the sofa)* They forgot about me— No matter— I'll sit here awhile—

And Leonid Andreevich for sure didn't put on his fur coat he went off with his topcoat— (*Sighing anxiously*) And I didn't see to it— The young saplings! (*He mutters something that cannot be understood*) Life has gone by as if I hadn't lived at all— (*Lying down*) I'll lie down awhile— You haven't got any strength nothing is left nothing— Ach you—good for nothing— (*He lies still*)

(*There is a far-off sound as if out of the sky the sound of a snapped string dying away sad A stillness falls and there is only the thud of an ax on a tree far away in the orchard*)

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G29 PRESCOTT WILLIAM H *The Conque t of Mexico and Th Conq test f Peru*
G6 PU HKIN *P em P e a d Plays*
G65 RABELA S *C plet Wo ks*
G1 SCOTT S R WALTER *Tl e Mo t Popular Novel (Quentu Dun d I nhoe & K n l rth)*
G4 SI ELLEY & KEAT *Compl te Poem*
G32 S ITI AD *The W lth of N t on*
G6 S ETI S OND L G *de t G t O h t l Mu ic*
G92 SPENGLER OSW LD *Tl e D l of tl e W t (on v lume)*
G9 SPENSER ED UND *S l t d P try*
G75 STE EN N P BERT L UI *S lect d W t g*
G53 SUE EUGENE *Tl e W d n g Jew*
G4 TENNY N *Tl I en nd Play*
G23 TO TOY LE A K —t revised
G T TOY LEO W *d P a*
G49 T N M RK *T m S wyer nd H kl berry F n*
G5 WI TS N W LT *L av f G*
G83 WILS N ED UND *The Shock of R gn t on*

MI CELL NEOUS

G77 *An Anth l gy f F m Amert Stori*
G54 *A l th l gy f F mou Brit h Stor*
G67 *A th l gy f F mou E gl h nd Amert n Poetry*
G81 *A Encycl p dia f M dern Amert n H m*
G47 *Tl Engl h l h l soph f om Ba n t M ll*
G 6 *Tl E op n l l l pl from D scart s to N tzsche*
G31 *Famou S en F tion St*
G85 *G t Ag a d l le f the Jew sh P opl*
G89 *G t Cl sical Myth*
G72 *G T l f Terror a d tl Supern tu al*
G9 *G t V of he R f rm t n*
G87 *M d l Ep*
G48 *Tl M t po n Ope C d*
G46 *A N l th l g f Modern I try*
G69 *O ll d d O l E terta ment*
G93 *I od An A h l g f om Cl er t B erbol m and After*
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G21 *Sixt en F Amer n Plays*
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G66 *Tl e Famou M der Nov l B fore th Fact* FRANCIS ILES *T ent s La t Ca* E. C BENTLEY *The House f the Arrow* A. E. W M SON
G1 *Tu lv F mous Play of th Pe or tion and Eighteenth Century (1660–18) Dryd n Congrev Wych ley G y etc.*
G56 *Tl W sdom f Cathol ci m*
G59 *The W sdom f Ch a and India*
G79 *The W sdom of I l*